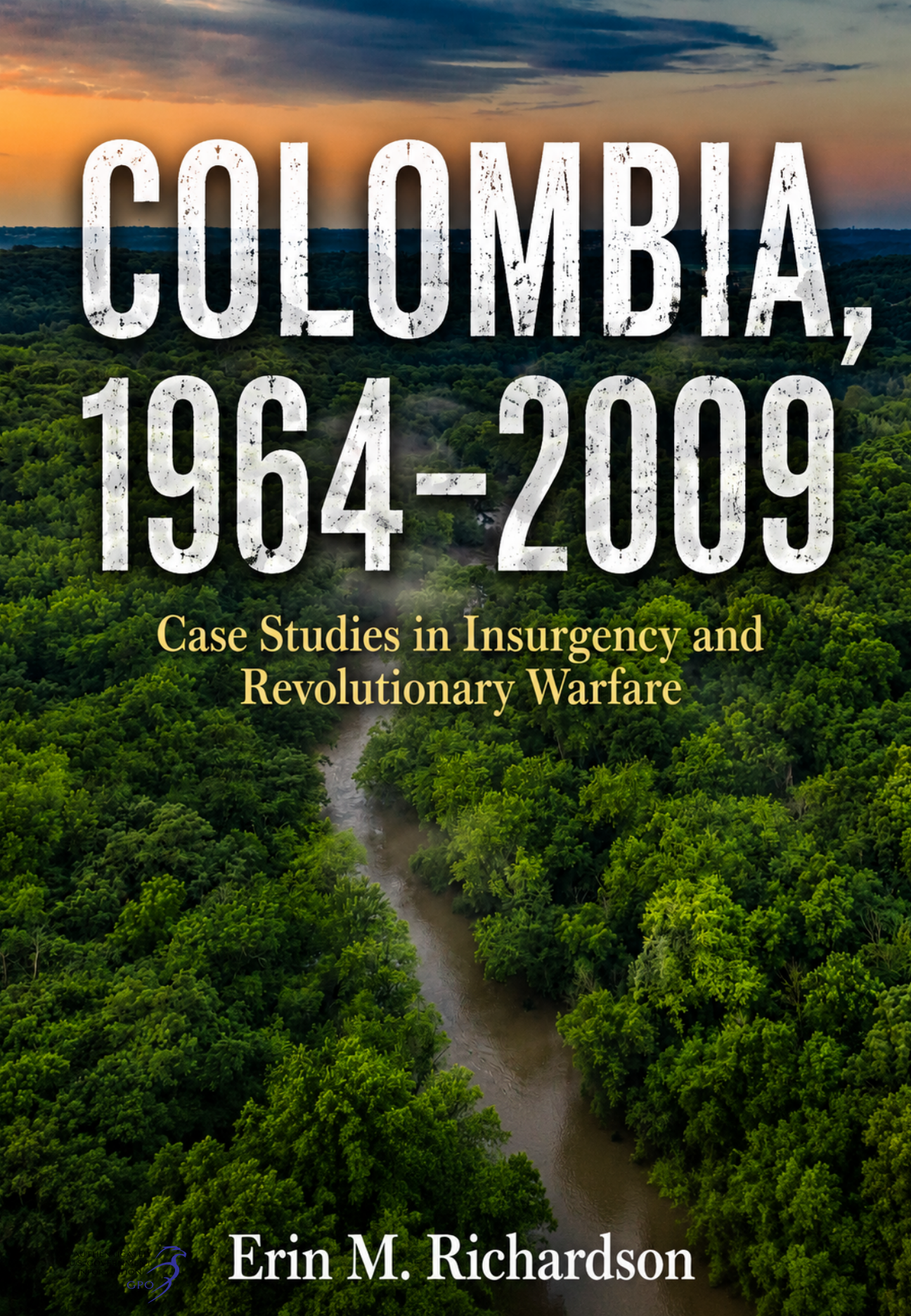
COLOMBIA, 1964–2009
Case Studies in Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare
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Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies

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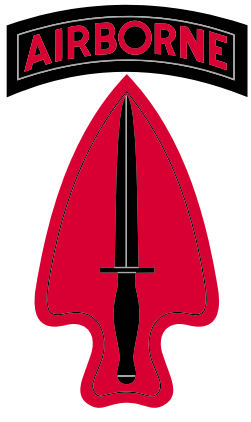

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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Since 1899, Colombia has been embroiled in a long and bloody series of interconnected insurgencies. The most famous of these are the Colombian fight against the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). The campaigns against these violent non-state armed actors, as well as against the other groups analyzed in this study, show the true nature of unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency. These campaigns are not quick, they are not clean, nor are they easy. To the contrary, these campaigns are the most difficult and complex a nation can face, requiring the delicate and effective application of all elements of national power through a synchronized and flexible campaign plan with clearly defined end states. Most importantly, the nation waging these campaigns must take ownership of the problem in order to effectively address it. Colombia stands as a premier case study in this regard. Assessing both the successes and failures of the Colombian efforts to stabilize their country provide an invaluable resource for US Special Operations Forces to professionally develop in their craft. This study, along with the other ARIS works, provides a vital historical prospective for all SOF personnel to read, learn, and internalize. It is this knowledge of how governments have successfully or unsuccessfully met these challenges and how the insurgents and revolutionaries fighting them did the same that will allow us to evolve and meet the challenges of the future operating environment.

BG Kurt L. Sonntag
Commander
Special Operations Command South

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies (ARIS) series is to produce academically rigorous yet operationally relevant research to expand on and update the body of knowledge on insurgency and revolution for members of the US Special Forces. We began this work with a rigorous assessment of all known insurgent or revolutionary activities from 1962 through the present day. To conduct this assessment, we agreed on a basic definition of revolution or insurgency.[a] For the purpose of this research, a revolution is defined as:

> An attempt to modify the existing political system at least partially through unconstitutional or illegal use of force or protest.[2]

Next we developed a taxonomy to establish a standard structure for analysis and to facilitate discussion of similarities and differences. We classified events and activities according to the most evident cause of the revolt. The causes or bases of revolution were categorized as follows:

- Those motivated by a desire to greatly **modify the type of government**
- Those motivated by **identity or ethnic issues**
- Those motivated by a desire to **drive out a foreign power**
- Those motivated by **religious fundamentalism**
- Those motivated by issues of **modernization or reform**

After applying this taxonomy, we selected twenty-three cases, across the five categories above, to be researched for inclusion in the *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.[3] For each of the twenty-three revolutions or insurgencies, the casebook includes a summary case study that focuses on the organization and activities of the insurgent group.

Subsequently, we selected several of the cases for a more detailed treatment that would apply a broader and more holistic analytical perspective, considering factors such as the social, economic, historical, and political context. Within the ARIS research series, these studies are

[a] The terms *insurgency* and revolution or *revolutionary warfare* are used interchangeably in the ARIS series. We adopted the term revolution to maintain consistency with the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) studies conducted during the 1960s, which also used the term. Many social scientists use an arbitrary threshold of battle deaths to delineate civil war from other acts of armed violence. Our definition relied on Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow's definition of contentious politics, activity that "involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties."[1]

referred to as "ARIS Tier 1 Insurgency Case Studies." This case study on Colombia is one of these works.

PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY

This case study presents a detailed account of revolutionary and insurgent activities in Colombia during the period from 1964 until 2009. It is specifically intended to provide a foundation for Special Forces personnel to understand the circumstances, environment, and catalysts for revolution; the organization of resistance or insurgent organizations and their development, modes of operation, external support, and successes and failures; the counterinsurgents' organization, modes of operation, and external support, as well as their effects on the resistance; and the outcomes and long-term ramifications of the revolutionary/insurgent activities. This foundation will allow readers to distill vast amounts of material from a wide array of campaigns and extract relevant lessons, thereby enabling the development of future doctrine, professional education, and training.

Like all products in the ARIS series, this study examines revolutions and insurgencies for the purpose of identifying emerging trends in operational designs and patterns, including elements that can serve as catalysts and indicators of success or failure. Building on an understanding of the general characteristics of revolutionary movements and insurgencies, this study examines ways that organizations or groups adapt to overcome various environmental and contextual challenges.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

ARIS Tier 1 Insurgency Case Studies are organized in five major sections:

1. Introduction and Summary
2. Context and Catalysts of the Insurgency
3. Structure and Dynamics of the Insurgency
4. Government Countermeasures
5. Conclusion

This *Introduction and Summary* presents an introduction to the ARIS series and a brief description of how the content in each particular case is presented and ends with a synopsis of the case study on Colombia. Refer to the *Technical Appendix* for a discussion of the types of sources and methods that were used to gather and analyze the data, as well as any methodological limitations encountered in the research.

The section on *Context and Catalysts of the Insurgency* is divided into four chapters that address various aspects of the context within which the insurgency takes place. This section looks at the following elements:

- Physical environment
- Historical context
- Socioeconomic conditions
- Government and politics

The organization and inner workings of each of the primary insurgent groups are analyzed in the *Structure and Dynamics of the Insurgency* section. Each insurgent group or organization is discussed separately in this section, providing details on the various aspects of each group. This analysis considers various characteristics including the following:

- Leadership and organization
- Ideology
- Legitimacy
- Motivation and behavior
- Operations
- External actors and transnational influences
- Finances, logistics, and sustainment

The *Government Countermeasures* chapter examines the political, military, informational, and/or economic actions taken by the government and by external forces in support of the government to counter the efforts of the insurgency. This chapter is presented chronologically, broken down by separate political administrations or by significant counterinsurgency campaigns or initiatives.

The final chapter, *Conclusion*, provides observations about the aftermath of the revolution, considering questions such as the following: Did any of the revolutionary or insurgent groups succeed in changing any political, economic, or social conditions as attempted? What changes took place over the time frame of the study—to the government itself as well as to the movement (e.g., did the insurgent group disappear, become the ruling government, become a legitimate political party, etc.)? This chapter includes a discussion about which objectives or goals of the opposing sides were met and which were not and what compromises or concessions, if any, were made by either side.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The 1948 assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the Liberal presidential candidate, is often described as an important turning point in

Colombian politics. The assassination marked the onset of Colombia's mid-century civil war, known as La Violencia, which pitted Liberal and Conservative partisans against one another, primarily in the countryside. This, however, neglects the generations of conflict, disenfranchisement, and deep unrest that preceded 1948. The current cycle of violence plaguing Colombia has its roots in this conflict.

The Conservative and Liberal parties were established in the mid-nineteenth century in the wake of the disintegration of Simón Bolívar's vision of a united Gran Colombia comprising modern-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela.[b] These parties bore little resemblance to the political parties in the present-day United States. Partisanship was based more on social identity than it was political ideology. The strong partisan identity in Colombia was compounded by an entrenched tradition of clientelism and institutional mechanisms in the government that gave significant control over patronage appointments to the party that controlled the presidency. The presidency changed party hands twice before the civil war, once in 1930 and again in 1946. The partisan violence that followed these transitions, and the inability of the Colombian government to protect its citizens, spurred the localized violence that coalesced into La Violencia. The armed self-defense groups that formed to mitigate the profound insecurity enveloping the Colombian countryside during La Violencia were the precursors to the leftist guerrillas and the paramilitaries still operating today.

The political pact, called the "National Front," between the Liberals and Conservatives that ended the civil war did little to accommodate the grievances of historically disenfranchised sectors of Colombian society. The pact alternated the presidency between the two parties, precluding the participation of minority parties in the political process, effectively shutting out rural and working-class poor. When the National Front took control of the government, leftist revolutions, such as the successful one in Cuba, began to sweep across the world.

The soil was fertile for revolutionary bands to foment armed resistance against the Colombian government to secure social justice through a socialist-inspired state. This study focuses on the four most influential nonstate armed actors in Colombia, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, or the FARC; the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or the ELN; Movimiento 19 de Abril, or M-19; and finally the paramilitary group, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or the AUC.

Two of these groups, the FARC and the ELN, formed the backdrop for the next fifty years of Colombian politics. The FARC, a direct

[b] Gran Colombia also included parts of Peru, Brazil, and Guyana.

descendant of the earlier self-defense groups, matured slowly. It built its base among the rural poor while gradually enhancing its appeal to urban workers and a small number of liberal elites. At the same time, the ELN began in rural farming communities with a message of national liberation. Both groups have had fluctuating memberships and alliances. Since the inception of these two groups, the Colombian army has sought to eliminate both, whether directly or in clandestine concert with various paramilitary groups.

Between 1964 and 1965, the ELN and the FARC began their military campaigns with similar goals of radically changing the climate of Colombian politics and society. Both the FARC and the ELN rely on urban and rural networks of formal and informal supporters. The militarized component of the FARC is a highly structured organization, while the ELN's armed component is less structured and more loosely organized. For a time, the FARC acted as the official military wing of the Colombian Communist Party. Both groups have used armed violence to defeat the government, make political statements, and pressure for favorable negotiating positions. They have also frequently engaged in hostage-taking/kidnappings and ransoms, at time terrorizing those very communities for which they claimed to advocate. The FARC is a larger, more capable organization than the ELN and has a much larger network of supporters. The FARC was the first to enter into the lucrative drug trafficking trade, with the ELN following suit early in the twenty-first century.

As a reaction to the far-left guerillas, the AUC was formed in the mid-1990s. The group is an umbrella organization for aligned paramilitary groups. Rabidly pro-state, the AUC was a far-right armed group whose mission was to combat leftist guerrillas. The AUC was funded by the cocaine trade and supported clandestinely by the Colombian government. The AUC was an especially violent organization; one of its primary tactics was targeting purported civilian supporters of leftist guerrillas. The group regularly engaged in civilian massacres, leaving scores dead. Available evidence points to purposeful collusion between paramilitaries, the military, and police in an effort to combat leftist guerrillas.

The M-19, although also a leftist insurgency, stands out from its FARC and ELN counterparts. Early on, the group adopted a flexible, Marxist-inspired ideology that agitated for democratic and structural reform but not the wholesale overthrow of the Colombian political system. The theater directors, artists, elected officials, students, and engineers that formed the group's core utilized avant-garde messaging that relied on awe-inspiring theatrical spectacle rather than overwhelming firepower to demonstrate the injustice of the socioeconomic

and political climate of Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the M-19 was uninspiring strictly considering its military capabilities, the popularity of the group spoke to its success. However, a botched hostage barricade operation at the Palace of Justice in 1985 that left more than a hundred dead diminished the group's popularity. More so than the FARC and the ELN, M-19 strategically positioned itself to legitimately participate in Colombian politics.

Over the past five decades, the Colombian government has pursued military and political solutions to the conflict, sometimes pursuing both together. In the early 1980s, the Betancur administration began formal peace talks with the leftist guerrillas. In a pattern that repeated itself with depressing regularity, talks led to cease-fires that ultimately failed as violence continued unabated. The FARC, ELN, and M-19 used violence as leverage to extract more advantageous negotiating positions. Cease-fires also afforded the groups opportunities to bolster their operational capabilities. M-19 remains the only group of those discussed in this work to successfully demobilize and enter the legal political process. After being elected to the National Constituent Assembly, former M-19 guerrillas played a critical role in drafting the 1991 constitution that replaced the National Front pact with a more inclusive, transparent political system.

The paramilitaries frequently acted as spoilers in the periodic peace processes. In the mid-1980s, paramilitaries engaged in a systematic campaign to assassinate amnestied guerrillas as well as those transitioning to the legal political process, as in the case of the Unión Patriótica, or UP, the FARC's ill-fated public component. The assassination campaign launched by the paramilitaries fostered profound insecurity among the guerrillas, impeding a political solution with the FARC for many years. In 2006, due to the efforts of President Uribe, tens of thousands of paramilitary soldiers demobilized. However, because many have transitioned to other paramilitaries, right-wing violence still plagues Colombia. At the time of writing, the FARC is currently in peace negotiations with the government, although no substantial progress has been reported.

Timeline

1849	Conservative and Liberal Parties are founded.
1899–1903	"The War of the Thousand Days"—120,000 people die in civil war between Liberals and Conservatives.
1946 (–1965)	La Violencia ("The Violence"), a localized civil war characterized by widespread violence between Liberal and Conservatives in the countryside. The conflict resulted in the deaths of 180,000–300,000 Colombians.
April 9, 1948	Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala is assassinated in Bogotá. The assassin is killed on the spot and the Bogotazo riot ensues.
1949	Conservative Party candidate Laureano Gómez Castro wins the presidential election. Colombian Communist Party introduces "mass self-defense" as means for peasants to protect themselves from armed Conservatives.
June 1, 1953	President Gomez is deposed by a military coup. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla becomes the new president of Colombia.
May 1, 1957	President Rojas resigns under the pressure of Liberals and Conservatives united under a combined political entity called the "National Front."
1958	Conservatives and Liberals agree to form the National Front, a power-sharing agreement, in a bid to end civil war.
August 7, 1958	The first National Front president, Alberto Lleras Carmago, takes office.
August 1962	President Leon Valencia Munoz is inaugurated.
1963	ELN founders Fabio Vasquez Castaño and Victor Medina Moron travel to Cuba to study guerrilla warfare with Fidel and Raúl Castro and other members of the Cuban Revolution.
May 27, 1964	President Valencia orders Operation Marquetalia—a government effort to dissolve self-defense forces. Manuel Marulanda, also known as "Sureshot," is able to hold out with a band of forty-eight men, marking the birth of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC.
January 5, 1965	In its first armed action, ELN overtakes the town of Simacota. Many regard this seminal event as the founding of the group.

1966	Communist Colombian Party holds its Tenth Political Congress. During the conference, the group declare mass popular action rather than guerrilla warfare as the primary means to achieve its goals. This is reaffirmed in 1971 at the Eleventh Political Congress.
1966	Camilo Torres, a nationally known left-wing priest and recent ELN recruit, dies in firefight with the Colombian army.
May 1966	FARC holds its Second Guerrilla Conference. This is referred to as the "Constitutive Conference."
May 1968	FARC holds its Third Guerrilla Conference. The National School of Ideological Formation is established.
1970	National People's alliance is formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.
1970	FARC holds its Fourth Guerrilla Conference.
April 19, 1970	Populist party the National Popular Alliance is denied electoral victory by Conservatives; the M-19 guerrilla group emerges.
1971	Communist Colombian Party holds its Eleventh Political Congress. The party reaffirms mass popular action rather than guerrilla warfare as the primary means to achieve its goals.
January 1973	FARC holds a plenary meeting during which Estado Mayor Central (EMC) is created.
January 1974	M-19 members steal Simón Bolívar's sword, gaining national attention.
1974	FARC holds its Fifth Guerrilla Conference in Meta.
February 1976	M-19 kidnaps, tries, and executes José Raquel Mercado, president of Confederation of Workers of Colombia.
1978	ELN reaches record low numbers (perhaps thirty armed supporters). ELN reorients its overarching plan to gain control of resource-rich areas of Colombia in order to gain strategic advantage and economic independence.
1976–1978	M-19 engages in public actions, such as the distribution of milk, chocolate, and toys, alongside its armed propaganda operations.
January 1978	FARC holds its Sixth Guerrilla Conference. National command structure is fully articulated to include the general staff of fronts and the secretariat of the EMC.
1978	President Turbay begins intense fight against drug traffickers.
December 31, 1979	M-19 tunnels into a Colombian Army weapons depot, taking more than 5,000 weapons.
February 1980	M-19 guerrillas seize the Dominican Republics' embassy in Bogotá; hostages are held for sixty-one days.

May 4–14, 1982	FARC holds its Seventh Guerrilla Conference. The group's "Strategic Plan for Taking Power" emerges, along with the additional moniker Ejército del Pueblo or "People's Army," which changes the insurgency's official acronym to FARC-EP.
August 1982	President Belisario Betancur Cuartas is inaugurated. During his inaugural speech, he announces that the Colombian government will engage in peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas.
November 18, 1982	President Betancur signs Congressional Law 35, granting general amnesty to all guerrilla combatants.
January 30, 1983–March 28, 1984	Government of Colombia and FARC-EP conduct peace talks. Talks end with el Acuerdo de Uribe (the Aribe Agreement).
May 28, 1984	Cease-fire begins under the Aribe Agreement.
1985	Eleven judges and ninety others are killed after M-19 guerrillas force their way into the Palace of Justice.
March 1985	Founding of the Patriotic Union Party (UP), FARC's public component.
1986	Right-wing paramilitary groups begin a murder campaign against UP politicians.
March 9, 1986	UP wins several seats in nationwide elections, to include fourteen members of congress. UP presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal receives 4.5 percent of the vote.
August 1986	President Virgilio Barco Vargas is inaugurated.
1987	UP leader Jaime Pardo is assassinated.
December 25–29, 1987	FARC holds a guerrilla plenum and decides to renew its efforts toward the "new method of operating" adopted during the Seventh Guerrilla Conference.
May 1988	M-19 kidnaps Conservative party leader Álvaro Gómez Hurtado; Hurtado is released two months later in exchange for the promise of a national summit to include guerrilla representatives.
March 1, 1989	Colombian government and M-19 sign the Cauca Declaration, providing the rebels safe haven and opening the way for talks and eventual demobilization.
May 10–17, 1989	FARC holds a guerrilla plenum and develops a military plan known as the Bolivarian Campaign for a New Colombia (la Campaña Bolivariana por una Nueva Colombia), which represents a four-phase strategy to be implemented in January 1990.
1990	UP presidential candidate Bernardo Ossa is killed; FARC withdraws from legal politics and focuses on strengthening its military capabilities.

March 1990	M-19 becomes a political party, the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD-M-19).
1990	Jacobo Arenas, political and ideological leader of the FARC, dies; Manuel Marulanda becomes FARC's top commander.
August 1990	President César Gaviria Trujillo is inaugurated.
February 1, 1991	Bolívar's sword is returned as a symbol of M-19's demobilization.
1993	FARC holds its Eighth Guerrilla Conference. It also decides that it is ready to implement the "New Method of Operating" first defined during the Seventh Guerrilla Conference.
1993	Pablo Escobar is killed.
August 1994	President Ernesto Samper Pizano is inaugurated.
August 1996	FARC launches an attack on the Las Delicias military base in Putumayo.
April 1996	FARC devises another Bolivarian plan called "The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia." Included with the plan is the creation of the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party (PCCC).
April 1997	The far-right paramilitary groups unite under the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) to combat left-leaning FARC and ELN.
August 1998	President Andres Pastrana Arango is inaugurated.
November 7, 1998	Peace talks with FARC begin. The *zona de despeje*, a safe haven the size of Switzerland, is established.
December 18, 1998	ELN commits its most deadly attack—after targeting an oil pipeline, the ensuing oil spill caught fire, resulting in the deaths of forty-eight villagers.
July 1999	FARC conducts a coordinated attack including multiple fronts in Meta, Guaviare, Huila, Putumayo, and Caquetá.
2000	US Congress appropriates 1.3 billion dollars for Plan Colombia.
January 17, 2000	ELN successfully bombs more than twenty power lines and towers, causing millions of Medellín residents to lose power.
January 2000	FARC conducts coordinated attacks against police stations in Une, Quetame, and Guyabetal, involving 800 guerrillas.
February 20, 2002	The *zona de despeje* is disestablished after FARC hijacks a commercial airliner, forcing it to land in rebel-held territory, and takes Colombian Senator Turbay hostage.

February 23, 2002	Presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and her vice-presidential running mate are kidnapped by FARC.
August 6, 2002	FARC attacks the presidential palace, one day before inauguration of President Uribe.
August 2002	President Alvaro Uribe Vélez is inaugurated.
April 2003	The Uribe administration is able to modify the Colombian constitution to allow government forces to make arrests without warrants.
December 2003	More than 31,000 AUC members agree to demobilize. An additional 15,800 insurgents from AUC, FARC, and ELN eventually voluntarily demobilize.
July 2004	AUC and government begin peace talks.
2004	Plan Patriota is introduced by Uribe, with the aim of establishing a permanent military presence in rebel-held territory.
December 2005	Exploratory peace talks with ELN begin in Cuba.
2006	The majority of AUC blocks are demobilized.
August 2007	ELN Havana dialogues end without agreement and "two different conceptions of peace and how to get to it."
March 1, 2008	The Colombian military kills Raúl Reyes in his stronghold in Ecuador during a Colombian cross-border attack.
March 26, 2008	Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda dies of a heart attack. His death is not announced until May 2008.
July 2008	The Colombian military rescues the highest-profile hostage of FARC, Ingrid Betancourt, who had been held in captivity for six years.

ENDNOTES

1 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 4.

2 Chuck Crossett, ed. *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009* (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2012), xvi.

3 Ibid., xii–xiii.

PART I.

CONTEXT AND CATALYSTS OF THE INSURGENCY

CHAPTER 2.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Figure 2-1. Map of Colombia showing political boundaries.

Colombia's physical environment is a central factor in the violence that continues to plague the country today. Its rugged, mountainous

interior shaped settlement patterns and troubling political legacies that have contributed to the cycles of violence in the past and in the contemporary era. Its rugged landscapes have offered safe havens for numerous insurgent and paramilitary groups, albeit with strategic tradeoffs. Most notably, Colombia's geography, alongside its political history, has played a key role in the development of its weak central state. Colombia's weak state capacity presents a threefold danger to its political stability—it foments grievances in underserved areas, allows the emergence and sustainment of insurgent organizations, and gives rise to armed self-defense and paramilitary groups.

In the modern era, physical environments are more than a country's natural landscape. In the past century, many countries, including Colombia, have witnessed historically unprecedented rural migrations to urban environments. Most of the world's population now lives in cities, not the rural countryside.[a] The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), two of the three leftist guerrilla groups discussed in the *Structure and Dynamics of the Insurgency* section, developed strategies that relied heavily on exploiting the rural hinterlands and the population those lands still supported. However, one guerrilla organization, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), also discussed in *Structure and Dynamics of the Insurgency* section, followed the urbanizing trend instead, adopting an urban-based strategy. Operating in the city presented difficulties for the group, especially in regard to operational security, given the high intelligence penetration within urban environments such as Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín. As it could not rely on military might alone, many of the M-19's operations relied on spectacle to sway public opinion in their favor. Whether in terms of organizational structure or military strategy, the physical environment in which the insurgents operated impacted how they operated.

COLOMBIAN GEOGRAPHY

Colombia is infamous for its imposing, rugged terrain. At the northern end of the Andes mountain range, Colombia's landscape is dominated by the commanding peaks—some reaching a height of 17,000 feet. The average peak in the country, however, is a more modest 9,000 feet. The Colombian Andes generally lack the height of the Andean ranges in Peru and Bolivia. The mountains are divided into three chains, running nearly parallel with one another. The chains, or

[a] According to the World Health Organization, in 1990, approximately forty percent of the world's population lived in cities. As of 2010, that figure rose to more than fifty percent.[1]

cordilleras, are typically referred to as the Western, Central, and Eastern Cordilleras (known in Spanish as the Cordilleras Occidental and Central y Oriental). The Western Cordilleras, running along the Pacific coast, have the smallest peaks, averaging 6,000 feet. The more robust Central and Eastern Cordilleras, in contrast, run about 9,000 feet in elevation.

Figure 2-2. Map of Colombia showing elevation/terrain.

As seen in Figure 2-2, the ranges cut a diagonal swath across the country from the northern border of Ecuador to the country's northwest border with Venezuela. The low-lying coastal Caribbean region is north of the northernmost range. To the east of the Andes lie the vast tropical plains, known as the Llanos, or Llanos Orientales, roughly 97,000 square miles of land. The plains become increasingly tropical as one travels south, eventually blending with the Amazonia region.

COLOMBIA'S WEAK CENTRAL STATE AND REGIONALISM

As discussed in the *Methodology of the Study* section in *Appendix D. Technical Appendix*, rugged topography can facilitate internal political violence by hindering the development of a strong central state. Colombia is certainly not an outlier in this regard. Throughout its history, the national government in Bogotá has struggled to solidify its control over the peripheral areas of the country. Efforts at centralization and development have been further hampered by a predisposition toward entrenched regionalism cultivated by the enforced isolation amongst the rugged mountainous interior. That regionalism, first notable in Colombia's struggle for independence, continues to influence Colombian politics today. More detailed discussions on how the demands of regional autonomy affected the development of the state and, later, the prevalence and endurance of political violence can be found in the following study.

Colombia's rugged geography influenced colonial settlement patterns that contributed to the country's regionalism, which in turn has historically hampered the development of a robust central state government.[b] As one historian noted, "The Andes dominate the topography of the more peopled parts of the country and, for most of its inhabitants, have established, historically, the fundamental conditions of life."[3] The majority of human habitation in Colombia, since the Spanish colonization, has clustered around the highland regions, offering an escape from the heat of the lowlands and the tropical diseases encouraged by the lush vegetation, moist climate, and warm temperatures. The country's proximity to the equator ensures that the regional temperatures remain relatively constant throughout the year. In the eastern highland region, the capital city, Bogotá, has a cool mean temperature of 56°F. Other large highland cities, including Medellín and Cali, are at

[b] Some scholars dispute the extent to which Colombia's rugged geography cultivated strong regionalism in the country. Appelbaum argues that regionalism in Colombia emerged from the process of state formation in the nineteenth century, not from its geographic features.[2]

lower altitudes in the Andes, resulting in a warmer mean temperature of 70°F and 77°F, respectively. In contrast, populations in the Caribbean coastal areas experience much warmer temperatures, averaging 82–86°F. Similar temperatures are common in other lowland areas, including the lowland river valleys of the interior and the Llanos.

Favorable climates and fertile land encouraged settlement in the intermontane valleys dotting the Andean landscape. Roughly nine percent of Colombia's territory is between 3,300 and 6,600 feet, whether in the intermontane valleys or on the mountainsides. Only a small portion of the territory, about six percent, is above 6,600 feet in elevation. Surprisingly, it is in these lands above 1,000 feet, about fifteen percent of the total territory, where the majority of the population lives. In the nineteenth century, about two-thirds of the population lived in the mountainous terrain. By 1964, that number had decreased somewhat to about three-fifths. Settlement in the lowlands, although accounting for over half of Colombia's territory has historically been sparse. The exception is the Caribbean coast, where access to the outside world encouraged denser settlement. The trend of migration to lower altitudes, however, has increased in the past century.

Colombia's imposing geography also fostered regional social, political, and economic differences. Populations in the Caribbean coast have identified more solidly with the culture and lifestyle of the Caribbean rather than with the Andean interior. The coastal region's proximity to external commerce, and thus the outside world, also encouraged historical differences among the coast and the highland communities. The various villages, towns, and cities across the three major cordilleras have notably different development trajectories due to the extreme isolation cultivated by the formidable mountain landscape.

The difficulties in traversing the three mountain barriers further encouraged isolation, leading to the formation of three broad regional demarcations: the east, the west, and the Caribbean coast. The primary mountain pass across the central cordilleras, the Quindío, could only be crossed via mule, or human porter, for much of Colombia's history. Likewise, the Honda pass, connecting the upriver port on the Magdalena to the Sabana de Bogotá, the highland plain, remained notoriously treacherous to navigate for more than 300 years. Many travelers have recounted the horrors of the path connecting Bogotá to Honda; precipitously steep ascents and descents coupled with heavy rainfall sometimes made the journey impossible. As a result, the net cost of transporting cargo was an astonishingly high thirty-eight to sixty cents per ton-mile in the mid-nineteenth century, compared with two to four cents during the same time period in the United States.[4]

This logistical hindrance occurred throughout the mountainous interior. The steep cordilleras roughly demarcated two populated zones—"an eastern zone, consisting of intermontane valleys and the flanks and immediate watershed regions of the Eastern Cordilleras, plus the upper Magdalena Valley, and a western zone, consisting of the Central and Western Cordilleras and the Cauca Valley between them."[5] Travel within the zones was relatively easy, but it was difficult to travel between the two zones well into the twentieth century. A series of intermontane basins along the eastern cordilleras, running north to south and incorporating most of the Cundinamarca and Boyacá Departments, provided routes of communication and travel. Since before European settlements, these basins have been relatively integrated politically and culturally. Farther to the north, above the Cundinamarca and Boyacá Departments, lies the Guanentá region, which is crisscrossed with deep ravines. Although Guanentá is somewhat connected with the Cundinamarca and Boyacá Departments, the obstructive barriers have ensured a distinctive identity in the Guanentá.[6] Likewise, the western population axis was historically connected through the Cauca River valley, encouraging greater political and cultural exchange. The valley allowed for overland traffic from Popayán in the south to travel over to Cartago in the north. The Pasto region, lying south of Popayán near the border with Ecuador, has historically maintained a more distinct identity due to difficulties accessing the land through the broken, mountainous terrain. Similarly, the more inaccessible Greater Antioquia region, north of the Cauca Valley, has long maintained an "ambiguous" relationship with its western neighbors in the country, sharing some cultural links but remaining "politically independent."[7]

Colombia's topographical features and the isolation they brought, as well as the influence on Spanish colonial settlement patterns, led to broad cultural differences between the regions. The decline of indigenous peoples in the west and on the Caribbean coast led to an influx of African slave labor, while the east retained more of its indigenous population. As a result, the western and Caribbean coast cultural identity is notably marked by influence of the African slaves. Cultural development in the east, by contrast, retained a "peasant population tinctured, in physiognomy and culture, with traces of the pre-Colombian Muiscas."[8]

The isolation among the three regions fostered political antagonism as well. Powerhouse cities in each region—Bogotá in the east, Popayán in the west, Cartagena on the Caribbean coast, and eventually other cities as the urban landscape expanded and altered—developed politically antagonistic positions vis-à-vis their regional counterparts. Even within the regions, rugged terrain and a paucity of incentives

to develop stable overland transportation and communication infrastructure, cultivated deep-seated locally autonomous tendencies that hindered the emergence of a centralized state similar to the levels of centralization in nearby states, such as Mexico. Historical settlement patterns among the cordilleras occurred sporadically in small pockets of arable land in the mountainous interior. The terrain limited the size but increased the quantity of agricultural settlements. In the lowlands and on the Caribbean coast, settlements tended to be small and widely dispersed, but for different reasons. The prevalence of cattle grazing, the foundation of a low labor-intensive economy, did not require larger settlements. Other regions, including the forested regions of the Llanos near the Amazonia region, consisted of scattered populations and little integration, either politically or economically, with their Andean and coastal brethren.

The diversity of arable zones in the mountainous interior also impacted national integration by discouraging trade. The fertile and diverse zones typically provided a wide variety of agricultural goods, significantly decreasing the need for interregional trade. Overland transportation networks would certainly introduce greater convenience, but it does not appear that Colombian officials were prodded to a significant degree by necessity for such routes. For much of the historical period, there was simply insufficient economic incentive to overcome the centrifugal forces dispersing Colombian political will on matters of national priority. More often than not, overland transportation routes were ignored, underfunded, or mired in regional political rivalries. As a result, while the Western world's industrial economy proceeded apace these developments, cheap goods produced and transported as far away as the United States and Europe were often cheaper than those produced less than one hundred miles from the Colombian consumer. This lack of external trade, bolstered only by gold and, later, tobacco, contributed to further retardation of the growth of the central state by hampering federal revenue collection. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the growth of the coffee industry, and accompanying external trade in the popular commodity, did eventually jumpstart Colombia's infrastructural development. As a national market developed in the twentieth century, and the transportation infrastructure to support it, denser urban centers developed in the different regions, especially the four largest cities in the country—Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.[c]

The Magdalena River was the lifeblood of these divided regions. For most of Colombia's history, it provided the only access to the

[c] Other factors, of course, inhibited external trade. Please see Safford and Palacio for a further discussion.[9]

outside world for a majority of the population. The river provided important transportation downstream. Accessing the interior through the river, however, was problematic. Entering the mouth of the Magdalena through the Caribbean presented such difficulties that many were forced to transport goods via more indirect routes. The frequency of rapids, sandbars, and swollen waters made upriver trips "purgatory" for those forced to endure them into the modern age.[10]

Settlement patterns of the Colombian countryside resulted in small, agricultural communities that were relatively independent from one another. Interaction between settlements was limited by poor communication and transportation networks. Most populations settled in areas with temperate climates or access to transnational boundaries. Settlers favored, and continue to favor, the Andean region and coastal areas, as opposed to the Llanos or Amazonia. Population densities are more concentrated in the former regions.

Transportation infrastructure in the country was woefully inadequate at the turn of the nineteenth century, even in comparison with that of its neighbors. Then, Colombia offered a sparse seventy-five miles of roads in a country nearly twice the size of Texas, hampered in part by its rugged topography and a wet climate several months of the year. Not surprisingly, Colombia has been called the "country without roads." Likewise, Colombia's development of railroad infrastructure also lagged behind that its neighbors. The country had only 350 miles of rail at the turn of the century, compared with 12,400 miles in nearby Argentina. As a result, most of the country was accessible only via foot or mule. Thirty years into the twentieth century, Colombia still had severely limited transportation infrastructure, with 750 miles of rail and 3,700 miles of road.[11] To compensate for poor transportation networks, the Colombian economy relied on river transportation, although decreased river levels throughout the dry months hamper even this infrastructure. To date, air transport remains the quickest and most reliable domestic transportation available.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ARMED GROUPS

Rugged terrain and dense foliage assist insurgent groups primarily by providing refuge while denying access in the area to security forces.[d] Data collected by the Global Terrorism Database, an open-source database collecting information on terrorist activities from around the

[d] Most researchers use mountains (or slope elevation) and forests as a proxy for "rough terrain." Little attention has been paid to other topographical features that impede government access or surveillance, such as swamps.

world, revealed startling information regarding the ubiquity of violence throughout Colombia. Figure 2-3 illustrates that no departments in the country were fully immune from the influence of armed groups. These events, however, are varied in nature, ranging from a bombing of infrastructure to kidnapping to armed robbery. Not every department experienced the same level of violence, as is depicted on the map.

Figure 2-3. Areas impacted by armed violence. The data include operations conducted by FARC, ELN, M-19, and the AUC over the history of those organizations.

The insurgent groups, discussed in the *Structure and Dynamics of the Insurgency* section, to varying extents, benefited from the mountainous interiors and heavy foliage of Colombia. The FARC and the ELN in particular relied on the inaccessible geography to locate headquarters and training camps and evade Colombian security forces and paramilitary groups. M-19, which adopted an urban-based strategy, did not benefit as widely as the other, more rural-based groups. Most of M-19's attempts to launch rural fronts failed. Moreover, as the technological capabilities of the Colombian military increased, the inaccessibility of the insurgent's jungle and high mountain sanctuaries became less of an advantage. Superior intelligence, and tracking devices, enabled the military to accurately target even the most remote insurgent leaders.

However, some initial geographic analyses of where insurgents operate and establish a presence suggests that these factors may not be as important as some researchers, and guerilla theorists, suggest. Research on conflict in political science has frequently found positive correlations between rugged geography and a country's propensity for experiencing insurgent activity.[12,13,14,15,e] However, the researchers conducting the analysis have typically relied on data at the national level. Recently, political scientists have begun to explore the relationship between geography and conflict at the subnational level.[f] This research pinpoints the geographic location of insurgents' headquarters, training camps, and operational events to better understand the conditions favoring the outbreak of conflict.

The limited geographic analysis of Colombia's insurgent activity has returned some surprising results. At the date of publication, the subnational-level data on Colombia necessary to conduct this research is limited. One researcher, Sarah Zukerman Daly, has provided a geographic analysis of insurgent activity in Colombia from 1964 to 1984.[17,g] During that time, thirty-nine percent of Colombia's 1,056 municipalities experienced political violence, while the remaining sixty-one percent did not. About ten percent of municipalities housed an insurgent base. However, in contrast to the conventional wisdom regarding the utility of dense foliage and rugged terrain to insurgent groups, Colombian

[e] However, no relationship has consistently emerged between dense foliage and civil war.

[f] For a detailed discussion of this emerging research program in the social sciences, please see Kalyvas.[16]

[g] Daly's statistical model uses "geo-referenced information on the victims and perpetrators (state, rebel, paramilitary, criminal) and on the kind and intensity of 7,729 violent events." The violent events themselves span 274,428 municipality-month observations. These observations, alongside the presence of a rebel base, comprise the dependent variables of the model. For a description of how social scientists use statistical methods in their research, please see Bos.[18]

insurgents were no more likely to operate in these inaccessible localities than other areas that did not have these features. Moreover, insurgents were no more likely to operate in localities farther from the centers of state and military power than in those localities closer to those centers of power. Rather than seeking out areas of sparse settlement, Colombian insurgents were more likely to operate in localities with greater population density.[h] This trend suggests that the insurgents' calculus on where to operate favored strategic targets, not simple refuge:[i]

> [Insurgents] do not aim only to hide; rather, they seek to exercise influence and gain support. Regions with higher populations, closer to the country's political and economic heartland, represent strategic areas; these are generally centers of power worth controlling, especially for guerrillas aimed at state take-over.

At the start of the 1990s, around two-thirds of Colombia had no police station or city hall or any government representative who was locally available. So the armed groups chose these underserved intermontane populations from which to garner their support.

The factor that contributed the most to the outbreak of insurgent warfare in a given area was the human terrain, not the physical terrain. In her model, Daly found that the areas most likely to experience insurgent warfare were those that had a history of organized mobilization during La Violencia. Those municipalities had an eighty-two percent risk of insurgent violence, while those municipalities that were not affected by La Violencia had only a twenty-six percent risk of insurgent violence. The implications of this legacy of organized violence are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

ENDNOTES

1 World Health Organization, *Global Health Observatory (GHO): Urban Population Growth*, accessed June 26, 2013, http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/.

2 Nancy P. Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846–1948* (Durham & London: Duke University Press 2003), 206.

3 Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2–3.

4 Ibid., 5.

[h] In the researcher's statistical model, a one percent increase in population density in a locality led to twenty-two percent increase in risk for experiencing insurgent violence.

[i] Further researcher conducted on insurgent activity in six central African states echoes this relationship between geography and conflict.[19]

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 5–6.

[7] Ibid., 6.

[8] Ibid., 7.

[9] Ibid., 13–17.

[10] Ibid., 6–7.

[11] Jennifer S. Holmes, Sheila Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Kevin M. Curtin, *Guns, Drugs, and Development in Colombia* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 14–16.

[12] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.

[13] Siri Camilla Aas Rustad, Jan Ketil Rød, Wenche Larsen, and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Foliage and Fighting: Forest Resources and the Onset, Duration, and Location of Civil War," *Political Geography* 27, no. 7 (2008): 761–782.

[14] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563–595.

[15] H. Hegre and N. Sambanis, "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (2006): 508–535.

[16] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Promises and Pitfalls of an Emerging Research Program: The Microdynamics of Civil War" in *Order, Conflict, and Violence,* ed. Stathis Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Massoud (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 397–421.

[17] Sarah Zukerman Daly, "Organizational Legacies of Violence: Conditions Favoring Insurgency Onset in Colombia, 1964–1984," *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no. 3 (2012): 473–491.

[18] Nathan Bos, "Underlying Causes of Violence," in *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, Second Ed., Nathan Bos, ed. (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2012): 13–15.

[19] Clionadh Raleigh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre, and Joakim Karlsen, "Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset: Special Data Feature," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (2010): 652.

CHAPTER 3.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The trajectory of Colombian history impacted the cycles of political violence that the country endured during the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first century. Recurrent themes, redefined but recycled by successive generations, have dogged politics in Colombia. One of the most important of those themes has been the tug-of-war over the right to govern between the Liberal and Conservative Parties.[a]

The competing political visions of Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander, important historical figures in Colombian history, were the progenitors of the two political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, respectively. Bolívar and Santander, and later their followers, struggled over the issue of centralization, with Bolivarians championing a highly centralized state ruled from Bogotá and Santanderistas preferring a federal structure that gave regions more autonomy. Likewise, the competing factions contended over the influence of the church,[b] with the Conservatives supporting a more robust role for the Catholic Church in society. The factions also battled over whether to include the lower classes in the political system. The Santanderistas, and later the Liberal party, argued for more inclusive politics. External factors, especially demographic and economic developments, necessitated a response to this important question. As employment opportunities blossomed in the cities, rural migration to urban areas increased. The new urban working classes demanded more from their representatives in government—more inclusion in politics and more policies tailored to address their needs, such as greater labor rights.

Despite these political differences, it was the vast patronage networks[c] powering the parties that gave Colombian politics its peculiar characteristics. Political differences, to some extent, informed partisanship. Yet, one's partisan identity was also inherited—from one's family, friends, region, and patron. Party affiliation provided not only one's political identity but also one's social identity. Personal rivalries and loyalties overlaid overt political struggles.

The patronage networks rendered politics an especially high-stakes game in Colombia. Party members resorted to political violence to settle their differences, rather than through legal channels. During the nineteenth century, it is arguable that Colombian politics were punctuated not by war but by peace. Civil war after civil war marred the political landscape until the disastrous War of a Thousand Days in 1899–1902.

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[a] Unless otherwise noted, this section is based on Safford and Palacios.[1] For additional seminal works on Colombian history, please see Dix[2] and Bushnell.[3]

[b] As Colombia is a predominantly Catholic society, references to "the church" refer to the Roman Catholic Church throughout this study.

[c] See *Chapter 5. Government and Politics* for a description of patronage politics, or clientelism, tradition in Colombia.

The war left nearly a 100,000 Colombians dead and led to the territorial loss of Panama. Suitably chastened by the macabre consequences of the war, the Conservatives and Liberals entered an unprecedented era of bipartisan support and cooperation that spanned decades.

GRAN COLOMBIA

Colombia's struggle against the Spanish Royalist forces was decided in 1819, when Simón Bolívar (Figure 3-1), a Caracas-born solider, led his forces to victory against the Spanish forces at the Battle of Boyacá. Bolívar, the former Viceroyalty of New Granada,[d] united the former colonies into a single polity, the Republica de la Gran Colombia, or Gran Colombia. However, the former colonies were not wholly liberated from Spanish rule until 1825. From the outset, Gran Colombia suffered from a multiplicity of conflicting opinions about the ultimate form the new polity would adopt. Some factions favored a more monarchical system, while others, including Bolívar, preferred a unification of South American republics ruled by a centralized state; still yet others wanted a federal system that provided for more regional autonomy. Several decades after the founding of Gran Colombia, these competing political visions formed the basis of the two political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, which have alternately governed Colombia for centuries.

After helping to liberate New Granada and Venezuela from Spanish rule, Bolívar, along with other elites, moved to unite the former colonies, alongside Ecuador, into a single country. They debated the extent of centralization that the new country should implement. Some looked to the United States as an exemplar of a decentralized structure but worried that Gran Colombia did not have the right conditions to make decentralization feasible, especially in terms of civic culture and education. As a result, the original constitution of 1821, called the Cúcuta Constitution, established a highly centralized state. It protected the state against popular demands from its citizens in its provisions for limited suffrage and indirect elections. However, the constitution did include important social provisions, incorporating indigenous populations, abolishing slavery through attrition, and implementing a broad-based educational system.[e]

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[d] New Granada included modern-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and, later, Panama.

[e] However, in the absence of federal funding, many communities did not have the resources to establish schools, nor were there sufficient trained teachers or incentives to fulfill the teacher labor demand.

Figure 3-1. Simón Bolívar. Painting by Ricardo Acevedo Bernal (1867–1930).

EARLY LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES: SANTANDERISTAS AND BOLIVARIANS

The early split between the Liberal and Conservative Parties first began with a split between Bolivarians and Santanderistas, the followers of Simón Bolívar and his vice president, Francisco de Paula Santander (Figure 3-2). The personal conflict between the two men (as well as between their followers) "may be thought of as establishing the magnetic field that has oriented a substantial part of Colombian political history."[4] The narratives supporting the divergent positions of these men framed the larger narrative that lie beneath the eventual split between the two dominant parties. In turn, the disagreement mirrored conflicts between different groups in society, each competing to uphold their own interests and ambitions.

Figure 3-2. Reproduction of an oil painting of Francisco de Paula Santander.

One of the main points of contention among these elites in early Colombian[f] history was the role of the church. The church played an important social and political role in Gran Colombia. At the time of independence, the church represented the only organized and disciplined group in the country. Gran Colombia lacked a national military, and much of the civilian bureaucracy was dismantled during the war for independence. Moreover, the church, with its highly educated clergy, fulfilled an important function in a society of mainly illiterate citizens. The country had a notably high concentration of clergy per capita. Of the approximately 1.25 million inhabitants, about one in every 700 was a member of the clergy.[5]

[f] In this section, the terms *Gran Colombia* and *Colombia* are used interchangeably.

Despite the prominent position of the church, a division of the political elite, educated according to Enlightenment[g] ideals imported from Europe, championed policies that threatened the traditional values and role of the church. The Colombian congress passed a number of measures designed to constrain the church's influence, including the abolishment of the Inquisition; the closure of religious houses with less than eight residents;[h] and the increase in age at which individuals could take religious vows to twenty-five. Heated disputes also arose regarding which institution had the right to appoint bishops. One faction of elites maintained that it was the inherent right of government to make religious appointments, while another faction upheld the right of the church to make its religious appointments.

In addition to questioning the role of the church, progressive elites in Colombia also encouraged the importation of "foreign ideas" designed to encourage European immigration to the country. These new ideas brought money, education, and other much-needed resources to the fledgling country. Freemasonry became prominent. As in other Western countries, many political elites belonged to various Masonic lodges. Membership became a common tie among members of the nascent Liberal Party. In addition, religious toleration was encouraged. The new toleration led to the formation of Bible societies that encouraged individual interpretation of scripture, viewed by many as an unacceptable Protestant intrusion into traditional Catholic practices. The clergy viciously attacked the spread of freemasonry, religious toleration, and other ideas.

Relations between two other influential actors in Colombian society—lawyers and military—were also notably strained. The military viewed the lawyers' focus on legalities and the rule of law as an unnecessary obstacle to effective action. However, the lawyers maintained the importance of incorporating the military under the rule of law after the struggle for independence had concluded. Thus, the military argued that the lawyers did not appreciate their efforts in the struggle, while the lawyers feared violent reprisals from military officers. Class conflicts also contributed to these tensions. Lawyers were university educated, while the military officers were usually from the lower classes.[6]

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[g] The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that gained traction in Europe beginning in the seventeenth century, later moving to the New World colonies. The Enlightenment philosophers advocated the reform of government and society by means of reason, offering a direct challenge to previous notions grounded in scripture and tradition. Thomas Hobbes's *The Leviathan*, published in England in 1651, is often regarded as the first treatise that systematically treated government and society through this modern lens. For this reason, Hobbes's contemporaries labeled him an atheist, a serious charge at the time.

[h] The money saved from these closures was funneled to secondary education.

In addition to these larger societal issues, personal differences between Bolívar and Santander drove the split between the two camps. Relations between the two men deteriorated during the latter half of the 1820s. Bolívar styled himself the founder of "new modes of order," as Machiavelli aptly described centuries before in *The Prince*,[7,i] and perpetrated the extra-legal acts needed to accomplish those goals. In stark contrast, Santander acted as the defender of the constitutional order. Santander's contemporaries named him El Hombre de las Leyes, "The Man of the Laws," in recognition of his reputation for supporting the letter and spirit of the law.

Difficulties between the two men solidified over Bolívar's desire to supplant the Cúcuta Constitution with his own Bolivian constitution. While in Peru fighting for the colony's independence from Spain, Bolívar helped write a constitution for Upper Peru. In recognition of his critical role in the formation of the nation, the state adopted his name—Bolivia. Flush with success, Bolívar wanted to write a similar constitution for Gran Colombia. He hoped a new constitution, styled after Bolivia's, would address some of the country's difficulties, especially as they related to Venezuela. Numerous factions within Venezuela chafed at the rule of the centralized state based in Bogotá. Some pushed for separation from the larger polity. As a result, Bolívar's proposed "Bolivian" constitution was controversial. Hoping to promote political stability, Bolívar included a provision for a life-term presidency. Offsetting this authoritarian provision, however, the proposed constitution would also institute legislative bodies designed to address more local concerns.

The Santanderistas opposed the methods that Bolívar used to press for the implementation of his constitution. He embarked on a campaign to adopt the constitution as quickly as possible. The Cúcuta Constitution singled out a specific date, 1831, before which time no constitutional reforms could be made legally. Despite these legal strictures, Bolívar pressed forward.[j] Because of Bolívar's refusal to abide by this constitutional law, Santander opposed the reforms as illegal. He

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[i] "Those like these men, who become princes by the path of virtue, acquire their principality with difficulty but hold it with ease; and the difficulties they have in acquiring their principality arise in part from the new orders and modes that they are forced to introduce as to found their state and their security. And it should be considered that nothing is more difficult to handle, more difficult of success, nor more difficult to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders."

[j] The US Constitutional Convention of 1787 faced a similar problem. Technically, the convention had only the authority to revise the Articles of Confederation governing the United States at the time. Instead, key members, such as James Madison, pushed the convention to wholly rewrite the Articles of Confederation. Although it met some resistance, the faction was successful, leading to the adoption of the current US Constitution.

believed Bolívar's insistence on pursuing the new constitution threatened the stability of an already fragile system.

Not surprisingly, the Santanderistas also protested the substance of Bolívar's constitution. They argued it was contrary to the republican ideals[k] that had fueled the struggle for independence against Spanish tyranny. A life-long president, which Bolívar's constitution insisted on, too closely resembled a monarchy, violating one of the fundamental principles of republican government—the alternation of power. For a time, Santander privately castigated the proposed constitution. Eventually, Santander aired his grievances publicly. These public airings, combined with Bolívar and Santander's pronounced differences of opinion on how best to handle a rebellion brewing in Venezuela, led the men to definitively split.

Bolívar's handling of the Venezuelan separatist movement, headed by General Páez, furthered the split. The Liberator (Bolívar's nom de guerre) quelled the nascent rebellion through conciliation rather than with the military. Bolívar regarded Páez, an influential military leader, as key to saving Gran Colombia. As a result, he reconciled with Páez by capitulating to the general's demands for greater autonomy from Bogotá in Venezuela. Santander and his allies, meanwhile, had wanted to quash the rebellion, bringing Venezuela more fully under the authority of the crippled national government.

Proponents of Santander, spearheaded by university-educated lawyers, referred to themselves as constitutionalists or liberals for their support of the Cúcuta Constitution. The constitutionalists' support was drawn from residents of the Magdalena Valley, from Mompox to Neiva, as well as moderates from Antioquia and the Eastern Cordillera. Some New Granadan military officers also supported the Santanderistas. Meanwhile, military officers, mainly Venezuelan, along with a contingent of New Granadan citizens, mainly aristocratic elements, supported the adoption of Bolívar's constitution.

COLLAPSE OF GRAN COLOMBIA

By 1827, elites of all political persuasions questioned the future of the Gran Colombian polity. Venezuela, New Granada, and Ecuador had begun to operate more or less autonomously. In 1830, after Bolívar's

[k] *Republicanism* is a broad term often used to describe support for governance based on popular will. As such, it advocates democratic participation, but within parameters set by a constitutional order. Please see *The Federalist Papers*, available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp, for the most thorough articulation of republicanism in modern times.

death, Gran Colombia dissolved into its constituent parts. Modern-day Colombia reformed into the Republic of New Granada in 1831.

In an effort to combat the centrifugal forces tearing apart Gran Colombia, Bolívar held a constitutional convention in 1828. Both sides, the Santanderistas and Bolivarians, made concessions. The Bolivarians, for example, conceded to the Santanderista demand for a limited-term presidency. Despite these conciliatory efforts, intransigence on both sides triumphed. After the apparent failure of the convention, with the support of his followers, Bolivar proclaimed himself dictator of Gran Colombia. The office of the vice president, which Santander held, was abolished. Santander himself was sent to the United States as the Colombian envoy. In order to consolidate his rule, Bolívar courted institutions he had once shunned, notably the church, overturning legislation enacted by the Gran Colombian congress that especially irritated the clergy. He also shored up support among the military by restoring the full measure of privileges that military officers enjoyed under Spanish rule.

Bolívar's efforts to hold together New Granada, Venezuela, and Ecuador failed as his regime met armed resistance from Santanderistas; Venezuelan, New Granadan, and Peruvian separatists; and other mutinous factions.

Bolivarians held another constitutional convention in 1830. The convention was packed with Bolivarian supporters, and the delegates appeared to come to a consensus on the future of Gran Colombia. The new constitution, however, emerged just as the country itself dissolved. Mutinous militias in Bogotá had confirmed the separation of New Granada and Venezuela. A dispirited and physically weakened Bolívar brushed off demands by the congress for him to return to the presidency. In his place, the congress elected political moderates as president and vice president. The moderate administration provoked armed disputes between Bolivarians and liberal supporters, leaving the Bolivarians in control of the capital. General Rafael Urdaneta then took over as provisional president with the understanding that Bolívar would take power when his health permitted. However, shortly thereafter, in 1831, Bolívar died. A compromise coalition government, under the rule of General Domingo Caicedo, took over rule of the new country, New Granada.

While the differing political visions of Santander and Bolívar divided the country, additional external factors also contributed to the collapse of Gran Colombia. After the threat of Spanish royalist forces departed, the former colonies had fewer reasons to unite than to disperse. The colonial authorities in Caracas and Quito were accustomed to independent authority, making rule from Bogotá an uncomfortable

change. Moreover, the respective capitals were a great distance from one another and separated by rugged terrain. These geographical obstacles rendered Venezuelan and Ecuadorian representation in the national government problematic. The former colonies also lacked internal trade relations and common fiscal policies that could have helped cement the troubled relationship.

PARTISANSHIP: IDEOLOGY OR SOCIAL IDENTITY?[8]

In the decades after the collapse of Gran Colombia, the split between Santander and Bolívar transformed into a macabre competition between the Liberal and Conservative Parties. If most people in the United States were asked to describe what distinguished a member of the Democratic Party from a member of the Republican Party, their explanations would be likely to include differences in political doctrine. However, the Liberal and Conservative Parties that emerged in nineteenth-century Colombia, while in part comprising differing political perspectives, also acted as powerful social identities for their members.

Liberal and Conservative partisan identity formed at the individual and regional levels. The individual motivations behind partisan identity can be difficult to determine. In general, however, individual partisan identity was formed "through a complex process in which events, relationships, and ideas [combined] to form political allegiance."[9] A person's economic interest, such as his/her position as a large landowner or a peasant, his particular patron–client relationship, adherence to certain ideals about how government and society should be managed, and, to some extent, pure chance, all intermingled to influence whether a person identified with the Liberal or Conservative Party.[10]

Social networks also influenced an individual's partisanship. In the early nineteenth century, a member of the Caicedo family, Domingo Caicedo, a powerful Conservative, joined the faction in part because it supported his economic interests as a large landowner. However, his personal friendship with Bolívar likely also contributed heavily to his political predilections. Had Caicedo's social networks tied him to Santander rather the Bolívar, his political loyalties could have developed quite differently.[11] Connections with various political events also shaped identity. One staunch Liberal in the nineteenth century followed in the footsteps of his father, executed at the hands of an early Conservative faction. As one scholar described, "He could no more have become a Conservative than he could have viewed his father as other than a martyred 'lover of liberty' and patriot shot for the 'political crime' of upholding the laws of his country."[12]

Regional differences in partisan identity are attributed to broader factors. Some regions, such as the Antioquia Department, historically associated with the Conservative Party, while others, such as the Cundinamarca Department, typically sided with the Liberal Party. Other regions, like the Tolima Department, were divided. There, Conservatives congregated in the south, characterized by large landholdings overseen by powerful local leaders such as the Caicedo family.

The Caicedo family serves as an apt example of the importance of patronage networks in Colombian politics. Early on, the Caicedos adopted the Conservative Party, which had traditionally supported the interests of powerful, landed elite such as their family. The Caicedo family was the overseer not only of land and wealth, but also the livelihoods of local residents entwined with the local ruling family. When the Caicedos adopted the tenets of the Conservative Party, they brought their followers with them into the Conservative fold.[13]

Meanwhile, free commerce, not an economy of landed elites, characterized the northern Tolima Department. Commerce exploded after the central government ended the tobacco monopoly, spurring private tobacco cultivation in the region. This economic development likely encouraged identification with the Liberal Party.[14] Residents enjoyed the fruit of Liberal reforms in ways that the large hacienda owners in the south did not. The middle-class merchants and nouveau riche that emerged as a result of Liberal economic reforms were a threat, not a boon, to the landed elite in the south. Lastly, migration patterns in some areas reinforced or introduced regional partisan identities. A steady stream of Conservatives migrated to the northwest area of Tolima in the nineteenth century, making the area a bastion of Conservative support.[15] Ironically, the emergence of the parties may have helped the nation coalesce into a more cohesive union. If not for the parties, Colombia may have remained a state of semi-autonomous regions ruled by men more closely resembling medieval barons, the *caudillos*,[1] than citizens of a modern nation-state. One scholar notes that "Colombia escaped permanent rule by *caudillos* in the 19th century thanks to the formation of the Conservative and Liberal parties, which divided the nation into two political parts and was to have significant and enduring consequences."[17]

[1] The *caudillos* were powerful, influential local leaders who maintained a patron–client relationship with residents. Their leadership was based on "landownership, military experience, or charismatic personality" and often filled a vacuum left by ineffective regional or national government. *Caudillos* were a "weighty force" in politics throughout the nineteenth century, occasionally launching themselves from local leadership into the national presidency. In the early nineteenth century, *caudillos* such as General Domingo Caicedo based much of their power and influence on the allegiance they commanded from their followers. Caicedo could rely on the hundreds—if not thousands—of followers to come to his defense. In turn, Caicedo's "clients" could rely on their "patron" as a "leader, protector, court of last resort, and in time of exceptional need their insurance."[16]

One of those consequences was a new intensity in politics, especially surrounding elections. Upon election, the victorious party gained the power to shape the future of the country as well as distribute financial and political booty. In this raucous time in Colombian history, election days were often met with violence as defeated parties resorted to the sword in protest. Between 1851 and 1895 alone, Colombia experienced seven civil wars and other localized revolts—all fought under the auspices of the Liberal and Conservative Parties. The juxtaposition of politics and violence solidified intense partisan identification so that "rare was the citizen who did not know where his political loyalty lay."[18]

Figure 3-3. The evolution of the Conservative Party.[m]

Figure 3-4. The evolution of the Liberal Party.

After 1831, a decisive split developed between factions of liberals with contrasting views of how the country should move forward after Bolívar's death. The liberal *exaltados*, or "extremists or purists" faced off with the "moderate" liberals. One of the primary conflicts between the two factions related to lustration, or how to incorporate political elites from a previous regime. The *exaltados* favored a complete cleansing of Bolivarian elements from ruling institutions, including the government and the military, ensuring, they believed, that a future Colombia would maintain a Republican disposition. They favored dramatic, sweeping reforms that wholly cleansed the political and military spheres of leftover Bolivarians and decisively broke the juridical and financial power of the church. In contrast, as their name suggests, the moderates championed gradual, non-confrontational reforms that incorporated Bolivarians into the ruling structure while bolstering the role of the church

[m] Early Conservatives used the term *ministerales* to describe members of their movement.

as an important institution maintaining social order. They believed this inclusion would ensure a more durable and lasting peace. Overlaying these political differences were personal rivalries and loyalties acquired during the fierce competition for political office and favor. Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4 depict the evolutionary trajectory of the two political parties.

The issue of purging and reincorporation continued to be a point of contention among political elites throughout the 1830s. The election of General Santander (1832–1837) to the presidency in 1832, Bolívar's one-time arch rival, was followed by the election of José Ignacio de Márquez (1837–1841), a moderate. During Márquez's presidency, the *exaltados* frequently accused Márquez of allying with Bolivarians, particularly after appointing several known Bolivarians to his cabinet, including General Tomás Cipriano Mosquera. After Márquez's installment in the executive office, his administration received evidence that a prominent *exaltados*, General José María Obando, had murdered a high-ranking military officer in 1830. The accusations prompted an investigation, zealously pursued by Márquez's secretary of war, Mosquera, conveniently also a bitter personal rival of General Obando's. The investigation, and subsequent trial, led Obando to abandon the judicial process for armed rebellion against the moderate Márquez administration.

Exaltados resentment against the Márquez regime, and its perceived Bolivarian ties, had already led to unrest in a number of regions. A civil war, pitting the *exaltados* and moderates against one another, resulted from the violence. Local rebellions jump-started in many populated areas of the country. The military officers fronting the effort mobilized substantial mass elements in some regions. Regardless, the war lasted about twenty-nine months, from January 1840 until May 1842. Ironically, as one scholar notes, "The strident Santanderista opposition to the Márquez government, and the subsequent civil war, propelled moderates into the very alliances with the Bolivarians and the clergy about which the Santanderistas has worried."[19] This moderate faction would officially adopt the name "Conservative" in 1848.

The typical Conservative and Liberal Party members also disagreed on several important ideological matters. The Conservatives showed a preference for social and political order and the institutions that supported those values. In particular, this meant support for the church as well as the central role of the family in social life. Conservatives encouraged the influence of the church in government and society, such as supporting the church's involvement in education. In matters related to politics, Conservatives advocated strong central authority and decisive responses to political opposition. Because most regarded property as a natural right, Conservatives supported only limited intervention

in the economy, favoring unfettered economic competition. Conservatives also adopted paternalist policies toward the less fortunate in society, relying on the sporadic charity and benevolence of the state and employers to aid those in need. These policies did not extend to any recognition of workers' rights or support of unions to represent the labor movement.[20]

While the ideological tenets of the Conservative Party were influenced by Hispanic traditionalism, the Liberal Party was heavily influenced by nineteenth century liberalism. Liberals argued that reason, not the church or tradition, should guide political and social life. In particular, Liberals were adamantly opposed to church influence in politics, which they believed was a purely secular matter. Liberals also resented any intrusion of the church in public education. In contrast to the Conservatives, the Liberals advocated a federal government that granted more autonomy to Colombian regions to govern themselves. Originally, the Liberals favored similar economic policies as the Conservatives. Over time, however, Liberals supported a stronger interventionist role for the state. Liberals also gradually supported legislation and policies that granted more expansive workers' rights, but not without internal struggles in the party.[21]

Other scholars have argued that it was not ideological differences that shaped the parties so much as the differing socioeconomic conditions. The most popular interpretation along these lines has pitted Conservative wealthy landowners, clergy, and military officers against the Liberal lawyers and merchants. A review of the evidence, however, suggests that cleavages based on socioeconomic status and occupation cannot reliably account for alignments to either party. More reliable interpretations conclude that the political alignments are attributable to the constellation of cities from which party members were drawn. For example, Conservatives, favoring the established political and social mien, were typically from former colonial centers, such as Bogotá, Cartagena, and Popayán. Indeed, Colombians who favored a more centralized state typically regarded those who favored federal structures, thereby preserving regional autonomy, as having lower social status. Some elites believed that those Colombians who favored regional autonomy did so only because it offered an entry into provincial politics for those whom otherwise had no access to politics at the national level.[22]

Despite their different views, the early Liberal and Conservative Parties emerged from a similar ideological tradition. The factions were united in their opposition to Bolívar's constitutional project, and both maintained a commitment to the rule of constitutional law. More generally, both were committed to similar cultural projects and looked

to similar sources of inspiration for political ideas. For instance, both groups sought to cultivate a society based on the Western European Enlightenment model, and both were versed in the political ideas of Baron de Montesquieu, Benjamin Constant, and Alexis de Tocqueville, all leading democratic theorists of the time. Furthermore, the specters of arbitrary military power and religious intolerance and fanaticism were equally unpalatable.[23]

THE LIBERAL ASCENDANCY

The election of General José Hilario López (1849–1853) to the presidency in 1849 signaled the beginning of several decades of Liberal rule.[n] The earlier civil war provided the context for both ends of the political spectrum. For the Conservatives, the violence confirmed the need for social and political order. For the Liberals, the violence galvanized its base to reclaim the national government. Once in power, the Liberal Party suffered from internal divisions but nonetheless adopted sweeping social reforms and decentralized the power of the central government.

Several important developments aided the Liberals. For the first time in Colombian history, portions of the popular classes mobilized to make political demands of their own. A class of young Liberals, influenced by the 1848 French Revolution, fomented the surge in populist demands. The French struggle had brought the ideals of the 1789 French Revolution more clearly into the consciousness of the young elite in New Granada, particularly its demands for equality, liberty, and fraternity. Many of them believed the republican principles that had driven the struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule remained unfulfilled. Vestiges of colonial rule were still apparent in slavery; the outdated revenue system, fiscal monopolies (such as on tobacco), and tithes; the role of the church in politics and society; and the failure to include the common man in politics. During this time period, partisan conflict generated by differing positions on these important issues led, once again, to open class warfare.

The Liberals, emboldened by European Enlightenment thought, pushed for organized mass politics. Mass politics signified both the inclusion of the lower classes into political institutions and enacting policies that addressed their needs. This Liberal contingent, comprising mostly young, university-educated elite, grew up in the shadow of the previous civil war and a *ministeriales* backlash against the inclusion

[n] However, during this period, the Conservatives sometimes had control of the legislature.

of Enlightenment thought in university education. Indeed, in the early 1840s, the *ministeriales* brought back the Jesuits[o] to indoctrinate ideas of social order in New Granadan youth. The young Liberals' aims dovetailed with the mobilization of the popular classes, such as artisans from Bogotá.

The artisan class resided in the middle ground between the elites and the illiterate, unskilled workers. The paternalistic approach of the Liberals eventually soured the relationship. However, the myriad Democratic societies that resulted from the alliance became the model for organized mass mobilization in many towns across the country. Occasionally, these organizations opted to intimidate their Conservative rivals through prodigious use of violence. After Conservatives complained of the armed tactics, Liberals dismissed the violence as "democratic frolics."[24] The violence drove the wedge further between competing groups, such as wealthy Conservative landowners and the popular classes.

For their part, Conservatives also sought to mobilize their followers and buttress their ideological position. The leader of the party at the time, Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, consciously adopted the symbology and rhetoric of the church to contrast its position with that of the "irreligious anarchism of the Liberal 'reds.' "[25] The Conservatives, like the Liberals, founded societies to mobilize mass support such as the Popular Society for Mutual Instruction and Christian Fraternity in Bogotá. Issues surrounding the role of the church in society and politics would prove a divisive issue, helping to propel the country into yet another civil war in the 1850s.

Liberal and Conservatives shared similar positions on economic issues, but most vehemently disagreed on the role of the church. Liberals advocated a separation of church and state, viewing it as too hierarchical and traditional to be truly democratic. Thus, the Liberals eradicated the *fuero*, the privilege that granted priests a trial in ecclesiastical, as opposed to state, courts in criminal and civil matters. Liberals also granted municipal councils greater sway in appointing parish priests and made the church more financially dependent on provincial legislatures. Despite admonitions from less radical elements of the party, fearful of the popular response the move would engender, President López expelled the Jesuit order in 1850. The Jesuits were feared as the "political instruments" of the Conservative Party.[26] The reforms,

[o] The Jesuits are part of a Roman Catholic religious order that has traditionally engaged in missionary and educational work since its founding in the sixteenth century. Because of the Jesuits' political and economic clout, some European monarchs, including the Spanish crown, suppressed Jesuit activity in the eighteenth century within their territories.

combined with the abolition of slavery, fueled a Conservative rebellion, quickly suppressed, in 1851. This period in Colombian history solidified the alliance between the Conservative Party and the church, viewed by the latter as the only institution capable of checking the dangerous democratic innovations of the Liberal contingent.

The alliance between the well-meaning Liberals and the emergent popular classes did not endure. While the artisans demanded greater tariff protection from imported products, the Liberal elites delivered lectures on the benefits of free-trade to the struggling artisan class. The break was notable when a military coup in 1854, precipitated by an amended 1853 Constitution delegating greater autonomy to regional governments, was supported by artisan militias. Fearful of anti-military legislation enacted as part of the reformed constitution, the military garrison in Bogotá had deserted the barracks and ousted President Obando's (1853–1854) Liberal administration. Several factors helped to cement the alliance between the artisans and the military. Both nursed a mutual hostility to the Conservative and Liberal political elites. Because the two groups lived side by side in the same neighborhoods, they also shared the same social networks, making them natural allies.[27]

Responding to the challenge presented by the military, Conservatives and Liberals joined in an alliance, calling themselves constitutionalists, to defeat the ruling military junta. Later, the alliance installed a constitutional regime, dominated this time by Conservatives. For a period of a number of years after the military coup, the Conservatives enjoyed an "interlude" of rule, bolstered by its efforts to forcefully undermine Liberal hegemony in key regions during the opposition to military rule. Under them, decentralization continued, thought by many to be a cure for the political violence that marred the country.[28]

Most regions in the country supported the efforts, although some, like Bogotá, resisted. Despite the efforts to diminish the incentives for armed competition for the national seat of power, provincial armed struggles continued. Compounding the problem, the legal language outlining the relationship between the national government and the states was unclear. Vying interpretations regarding this relationship, alongside the intrusion of the national government into state politics, was a potent source of conflict for decades to come, eventually bringing the country to another civil conflict in 1859–1863.[29]

A splinter of the Liberal Party, known as the Radicals, gained control of the executive office after the conflict. They maintained control until nearly the conclusion of the 1870s. After it lost control of the presidency, the Liberal Party suffered an irreparable division after the presidential election of 1875–1876, separating the Radicals from the

Independents. The newly formed Liberal splinter, the Independents, allied itself with the Conservatives, ultimately leading to the election of Liberal Rafael Núñez to the presidency.

Núñez's regime ushered in a period of state formation that proved critical for the development of the modern Colombian state. One of the most significant developments during his tenure was his adoption of a new constitution in 1886.[p] The Constitution, which remained in effect until 1991, included provisions for a more centralized republic. Political offices that had previously been filled through elections were, under the new constitution, replaced with government-determined appointments. Universal male suffrage was circumscribed with literacy requirements. He ensured that the Catholic Church's role in politics and society was reinvigorated, especially in matters of education. With the aid of Conservatives, he oversaw the revocation of many political and social reforms which the Liberal Party had enacted during previous decades of rule.[31] Núñez's rethinking of the Colombian political landscape earned him the nickname the "Regenerator."

The exclusion of Liberals from government, combined with falling coffee prices that exerted downward pressure on the economy, helped spark the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902). This final, and bloodiest, of Colombia's nineteenth century civil conflicts killed 100,000 people and ended in the loss of the Panama isthmus in 1903. One of the positive outcomes of the horrific, and costly, war was an about-face of political culture. Both Liberals and Conservatives were keenly aware of the high costs and few benefits of resorting to violence to resolve political differences. In the early twentieth century, a pragmatic return to partisan cooperation established the political stability requisite for the regeneration of the Colombian economy.[32]

The next several decades in Colombian history are occasionally referred to as the Pax Conservadora (1904–1930). A prosperous economy and bipartisan cooperation were some of the hallmarks of this Conservative era. The Conservative General Rafael Reyes, elected to the presidency in 1904, had support from a faction of moderate Conservatives and tacit, if not outright, support from Liberals. Although Reyes, due to a number of factors, eventually fell from grace, he was successful in abolishing many troublesome exclusionary policies enacted during the Regeneration, encouraging bipartisan support. Both parties agreed on the need for state and regional investments to boost the economy as members on either side belonged to the coffee economy and "endorsed the liberal political ideology, social conservatism, and

[p] After the Cúcuta constitution, Colombians rewrote their constitution in 1830, 1832, 1843, 1853, 1858, 1863, 1886, and 1991. Currently, the Colombia is ruled under the 1991 constitution.[30]

pro-export economic policies of the new order."[33] Indeed, until 1950, all transitions of power within the government occurred constitutionally, a near miracle for a country riddled with political violence.

The Pax Conservadora, however, eventually tarnished. Charges of fiscal management, for instance, surfaced in the late 1920s. However, far more damning for the national government was the army's response to a banana strike in 1928. The strikers were banana harvesters working for the United Fruit Company, a corporation headquartered in the United States. Soldiers attacked and killed the strikers. Many interpreted the response as evidence that the Colombian government favored US interests over those of their own countrymen.[q] Socialists already active within Colombia planned an ultimately unsuccessful armed revolt against the Conservative regime.[34]

The events highlighted the increasing political consciousness of many working-class Colombians. Many were drawn to the cities by the promise of well-compensated employment. A glut of public projects financed by borrowed monies created a wealth of employment opportunities. Some rural areas of Tolima were so depleted as a result of the urban migration that coffee crops could not be harvested. This bountiful period in the early twentieth century was called the "dance of the millions." The increase of workers in urban areas, alongside employment that provided for more than basic needs, facilitated the rise of a "proletariat" class:

> The lure of jobs in the city enticed many people into the money economy for the first time. A new class of workers sprang up among those who could now satisfy their own immediate needs and who entertained the prospect of constantly increasing salaries. Soon the urban proletariat began to explore ways of increasing its leverage within society.[35]

Strikes, such as those of transportation workers from urban regions in Tolima, became more commonplace. The rise of socialist activity concerned governing officials, fearful of "Bolshevik" subversion.

While political elites continue to govern the country, other organized political actors also gained influence during this time. Unions, for instance, and their attendant concern for worker's rights, became an influential component of politics. This trend was especially apparent

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[q] This period also coincided with the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a tremendously influential novel authored by Colombian Gabriel García Márquez. The novel's moving depiction of the death of the strikers helped to shape Colombian's collective memory of the incident. Later, leftist guerrilla insurgents from the M-19 would cite the work as influential in the development of their ideology. See the *M-19 Ideology* section.

after the Liberals took control of the presidency in 1930, bolstered by turns to Socialist politics the world over during the Great Depression. Other leftist concerns included land reform to protect peasant access to lands, but, unlike the labor movement, there was no widespread, cohesive agenda pursued by peasant populations at this juncture. As one historian notes, "As a matter of party alliances, the unions were to the Liberals what the church was for the Conservatives."[36]

In the 1930s, positions on labor determined where one stood on the political spectrum. The radical left of the Liberal Party took up the clarion call of Communism and Socialism, negating the need for a strong Communist or Socialist party as such. The Liberals' efforts on behalf of workers' rights—including the right to unionize; the right to strike; and eight-hour workdays and a forty-eight-hour workweek—ensured popular sympathy for the Liberal Party. For its part, historically aligned with the Conservative Party, the church also attempted to co-opt and cultivate unions but met with little success.

ENDNOTES

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[23] Ibid., 136.

[24] Ibid., 199.

[25] Ibid., 203.

[26] Ibid., 204.

[27] Ibid., 209–210.

[28] Ibid., 212–213.

[29] Ibid., 216–217.

[30] Christopher Michael Cardona, "Politicians, Soldiers, and Cops: Colombia's La Violencia in Comparative Perspective" (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2008), 13.

[31] Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2002), 14.

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[33] Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953*, 15.

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CHAPTER 4.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A variety of socioeconomic conditions have contributed to the ongoing violence in Colombia. Unlike many ongoing conflicts today, the violence in Colombia has not been fueled by ethnic differences.[a] Instead, the major insurgent groups contributing to the violence in Colombia rely on variations of communist, socialist, and nationalist rhetoric to mobilize and sustain their popular base. Rapid demographic changes in the twentieth century, including population growth and urbanization, helped to exacerbate the economic and social inequalities undergirding this rationalization, and support, of leftist insurgencies. These ideological motivations, especially in the case of the FARC, are often complemented by greed-based motivations for conflict, spurred by Colombia's abundance of exploitable natural resources. The resources, especially coca, have helped to financially sustain, and personally enrich, guerrilla organizations and their leaders. When mixed with the closed, albeit democratic, political system characterizing Colombia, the socioeconomic conditions have created a potent environment for rebellion. The economically, socially, and politically excluded groups, such as peasants, small landholders, and the urban poor, form the backbone of popular support for leftist guerrillas.

ETHNICITY

Colombia originated as a Spanish colony, gaining independence in 1810.[1] As a result of the country's colonial heritage, Spanish is its primary language and Catholicism its primary religion, practiced by approximately ninety percent of the population. The people of Colombia are classified under three racial groups: Amerindians, blacks, and whites. As a result of 500 years of commingling, Colombia is described as one of the most diverse countries in the Western Hemisphere, comprising some eighty-five different ethnic groups.[2] Many Colombians self-identify as white, even though only twenty percent of Colombians have primarily European ancestry.[3] Most are likely mestizos, of mixed European and indigenous descent; slightly more than half of the Colombian population falls in this category.[4] Despite this apparent diversity, the conflict bedeviling Colombia for decades has not typically originated from these ethnic differences. Instead, political, economic, and social inequalities have proven to be much more salient.

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[a] This peculiar aspect of the conflict partially derives from the legacy of clientelism that shaped Colombian politics, especially during La Violencia, when the seeds for the leftist insurgencies were first planted. The two dominant poles of Colombian politics, the Liberal and Conservative parties, built their popular bases on vast patronage networks. It was these relationships of benefit, oftentimes handed down in families over generations, that defined what constituted a "Liberal" or a "Conservative," not any specific ideological or ethnic affinity.

Colombia's colonial rule divided the country, not only by geography but by ethnicity and class as well. Peasant populations in the eastern parts of the country succeeded in the agricultural sectors and were more independent than those on the western Caribbean coastlines where slaves were brought in to work the land. Colonial history also influenced where these concentrations of ethnic groups lived, with whites and mestizos living primarily in urban centers, including Bogotá.[5] The colonizers themselves settled in the larger highland cities and controlled only sections of the land, leaving the countryside mostly outside of their area of control. Colonizers chose to settle in cities with indigenous populations, which could be used to mine lands for gold, silver, and other minerals. However, these indigenous populations and Indian peasants were resistant to acculturation and difficult to control. As a result, the Spanish colonizers forced several labor rules on the indigenous to guarantee their cooperation.[6] Mestizos also moved into the Andean highlands as a result of Spanish conquerors intermingling with Amerindian women.[7]

Colombia has three groups of ethnic minorities that are socially, economically, and politically disadvantaged: indigenous or Amerindian, Romany gypsies, and Afro-Colombians or blacks. Although Colombia's insurgencies are not triggered by ethnic claims, ethnically marginalized groups found new voices in the Communist insurgencies whose primary concern was that of class, not race. Black populations live primarily in the lowlands on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, particularly in the departments of Bolívar, Chocó, and Valle de Cauca.[8] Because of their proximity to the Spanish, black slaves were more exposed to Spanish culture, allowing them to become a part of Colombian society, unlike Amerindians.[9] Adopting this Spanish culture enabled blacks to feel themselves superior to Amerindians at the end of colonial rule.[10] Amerindians are mostly concentrated along the Amazonian areas. As a group, Amerindians[b] exercise legal autonomy, implementing and enforcing their own traditional laws and customs within their own territories.[11] Although the Amerindians represent a small percentage of the national population, they were granted nearly a quarter of Colombia's territory under the 1991 Constitution.[12]

[b] Indigenous populations in Colombia have pressed for reforms on the basis of ethnic claims. One insurgent organization, the Quintín Lame Group, was formed expressly to represent the interests of indigenous populations. Indigenous political activists then allied with M-19 during the 1991 National Constituent Assembly to successfully press for constitutional reforms favorable to indigenous interests.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The twentieth century was a period of rapid growth and demographic change in Colombia. The population grew from approximately four million people at the beginning of the twentieth century to about twelve million by 1951.[13] By 2012, the population had increased to 47.7 million.[14] Gains in human development facilitated Colombia's population growth. Improvements in modern medicine and the Colombian public-health system, lower death rates, and increased income rates led to higher birth rates, which in turn led to a population growth of about two to three percent each decade. As other socioeconomic factors (including increased urbanization, better health care, and better education for women) improved, the birth rate fell by forty-five percent in 1966. Additionally, newborns were expected to live longer by about nine years and to have better chances of surviving, with decreased infant mortality rates of about twenty-seven percent.[15] Life expectancy at birth grew from fifty years of age in 1951 to sixty-two in the 1970s.[16]

Colombia's population density, especially in urban areas, has also significantly increased over the past century. Most of the population is concentrated in the mid- to northwestern part of the country and in the cities of Medellín, Bogotá, Barranquilla, and Cali. Nearly sixteen percent of the country's population now lives in Bogotá, a tenfold increase in the city's population over the past sixty years. Four Colombian cities boast more than a million inhabitants while thirty-three smaller cities have between 100,000 and 500,000 residents. The number of Colombians living in urban areas has increased from a low of thirty-one percent in 1938 to seventy-five percent in 2010. By contrast, Colombia's eastern lowlands, which comprise more than half of the country's area, are scarcely populated.[17]

ECONOMIC POLICY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Postcolonial land reform exacerbated existing social divides in Colombia. During the late nineteenth century, the newly independent Colombian government instituted a major land-reform effort, privatizing public lands and establishing many small and medium-sized farms, giving title to many small farmers. Two sets of legislation (one passed in 1874 and another in 1882) were instated to protect these new landowners from settler resistance.[18] While this land reform enabled small and medium-sized farmers to own property and cultivate their newly acquired lands, peasant settlers were unable to overcome obstacles in the titling process, including legal fees, surveyor fees, and fencing. Peasants' obstacles were compounded by large landowners who

would occupy their lands and hinder the titling process for peasants who wished to claim their property rights.[19] The need for land reform continues to be the source of the FARC's political legitimacy among its supporters.

Colombian industrialization in the early 1900s benefited from payments from the United States for the separation of Panama as well as from Colombia's growth in the agricultural sector. However, as Colombia's economy developed, land reform policies contributed to growing tensions between rural and urban populations as well as between landowners and peasant farmers.[20] Large landowners who benefited from the land reform legislation strived to match global demands from Colombia's agricultural sector. As a result, these landowners needed to create a large labor force, which was often accomplished through large land seizures from peasant farmers.[21] As divisions among the social classes expanded, the 1914 Indian peasant rebellion and the 1919 labor conflicts among urban workers led to the formation of organized labor, which eventually created the umbrella organization called the the Partido Socialista Revolucionario (PSR), or the Revolutionary Socialist Party, in 1929.[22] Centered in villages and small towns, the PSR helped organize mass action among the proletariat in both the coffee economy and other export industries.

Colombia witnessed a period of major socioeconomic and political change in the 1930s, which brought the Liberals to power until 1946. During this period, economic problems threatened depression in the Colombian economy, which prompted Liberals to intervene by instating protectionist policies.[23] These policies enhanced central government power and introduced social and economic reforms such as the right to strike, changes to welfare and labor laws, education policy, income taxes, and separation of church and state, which led to increased radicalization in the public.[24] While the masses were becoming more radicalized, these social reforms averted leftist groups from taking advantage of the depressed situation. This remains one of the goals of the current Colombian government, which seeks to demobilize, deradicalize, and reintegrate FARC insurgents. The hope is that by doing so, and politicizing the group, other leftist parties can benefit by espousing similar social reform policies without the taint of FARC violence. Ultimately, this would erode FARC's remaining popular support.

The global depression in the 1930s drove up coffee prices, contributing to higher rural incomes and greater government revenues for Liberals to use toward developing Colombia's domestic industries and urban employment.[25] However, the protectionist policies and focus on domestic economic growth did not favor the Conservatives or the peasant population, who were working the lands with little benefit,

fomenting violence between Liberals and Conservatives in La Violencia, a civil war described in greater detail in *Chapter 5. Government and Politics*. During this time, peasant resistance combined the self-defense model with guerrilla warfare until they joined the FARC in 1964 as a way to "use the armed struggle as part of a political strategy to seize national power."[26]

In the post-World War II period (mid to late 1940s), agriculture, mostly coffee, at forty percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), dominated the Colombian economy.[27] Coffee was the main export crop, which supplied seventy percent of all exports. Oil and other exports, including minerals, comprised the second-largest category, followed by other agricultural products (sugar, bananas, and tobacco).[28] As a result of its heavy dependence on such a volatile commodity, Colombia attempted to diversify its exports by focusing on some of the less dominant exports. However, the coffee economy remained strong. Most of the policies implemented to expand other industries did not positively impact the trade industry. As a result of the strong coffee economy, the Colombian GDP grew above six percent per year between 1952 and 1954.[29]

Populist economic policies of the military dictator, General Rojas Pinilla, who took power in a coup d'état in 1953, were heavily influenced by Argentinean leader Juan Domingo Peron. Rojas Pinilla attempted to implement public works programs, taxed the elites, and instated rural credit programs to assist small farmers.[30] However, his attempts at foreign exchange rate liberalization and import controls in the first two years of his rule failed to muster the support he sought. In addition to a large fall in coffee prices in 1956, "Colombia found itself facing growing balance of payments problems, capital flight, economic recession, and rising inflation."[31]

In the post-Rojas Pinilla period, austerity programs led to devaluation of the peso and new fiscal and monetary policies. Although these programs demonstrated marginal success in reducing inflation and balance of payments problems, the solution was short-lived as balance of payments problems reemerged in early 1962. To improve the country's economy, President Valencia was forced to implement two unpopular measures—instituting import controls causing the GDP to fall almost two percentage points[c] and eliminating "free" exchange rates.[32] The ensuing devaluation of the peso and inflation caused considerable public discontent, leading to new economic policies.

After drastic economic, social, and demographic changes toward import substitution industrialization (ISI) from the 1950s to 1990s,

[c] The GDP fell from 5.4 percent in 1962 to 3.3 percent in 1963.

Colombia "more than doubled its population and became a substantially younger and more urban country with a rising middle class."[33] During this period, the real GDP and income per capita grew at 4.6 and 1.9 percent per year, respectively.[34] Population growth at this time was about 4.8 percent per year; however, per-capita income increased by only 1.4 percent. Colombia's new ISI policies aimed at focusing "foreign direct investment (FDI) . . . in products that were oriented towards the domestic market and rarely exported," which increased, "demands for employment, social services, and infrastructure from the emerging urban population [and] led to a broader involvement of the state."[35] While Colombia's urbanization contributed to some improvements in health and education, unequal income distribution remains a point of contention for the countries with developing insurgent groups.[36] Policies intended to ameliorate this skewed income distribution have consistently failed to be implemented, leaving those who moved from rural areas to *turgurios,* or slums, in the cities marginalized. Crime plagues these *turgurios.* Around eighty to ninety percent of homicides in Colombia derive from criminal, not political, motivations.[37] Other social problems, such as child labor, abuse, and prostitution, in addition to sex trafficking of women and children, continue in Colombia and occur in the urban centers as well as rural locations.

Colombia's social advances have historically been mixed, affecting some groups positively while excluding other groups. This unevenness has not only led to marginalization of some groups, providing a pool of recruits for its insurgencies, but has also widened the already existing social divides in the country. Although Colombia is resource rich and has high human capital, it remains troubled.[38]

Resource Curse: Coca, Coffee, Oil/Gas

Colombia's rich agricultural industries, including both coffee and coca in addition to its oil and gas and other minerals, make the country susceptible to another dominant socioeconomic cause for conflict: the "resource curse"[39] argument. The resource curse is a paradox that the presence of lootable natural resources such as diamonds, emeralds, gold, oil, or drugs often depresses a country's ability to advance economically. One would expect that having such valuable natural resources would promote growth; however, dependence on these resources makes the economy more vulnerable as there are few incentives for governments to pursue activities outside of these resources. This dependence on natural resources leaves governments, which are often already developing and weak, susceptible to corruption, allowing space for insurgents to operate. In the case of Colombia, this paradox of plenty—both licit

and illicit natural resources—has enabled the sustainment of insurgent movements, as these resources are easily accessed, and, for the most part, they are cultivated from the movements' rural strongholds.

Coca Economy

Coca production and cultivation in Colombia began in the 1970s, after most of the insurgencies in this study had already formed.[40] Therefore, while the drug trade did not spark the insurgency, access to these resources provided a means for sustainment. As a direct result of strong antidrug policies in Peru and Bolivia in the late 1980s, Colombia witnessed an increase of coca production and trade.[41] The FARC and other insurgencies then capitalized on this trade, which reached its peak in the 1980s–1990s. Grown in thousands of small peasant holdings, the coca leaves are harvested and dried by farmers who sell them to entrepreneurs, who then turn the dried leaves into paste to be processed into cocaine.[42] Both insurgents and paramilitary groups profited from the coca trade as drug cultivation and conflict increased.[43] See the *Finances, Logistics, Sustainment, and Communications* section in *Chapter 6. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)* for more details on the narcoeconomy.

Coffee

Colombia enjoyed greater political stability in the early twentieth century, helping to nurture the important coffee economy from the late 1800s to early 1990s. This coffee boom paved the way for Colombia's subsequent industrialization, which led to conflict between liberal landowners and small family-owned farmers in the western highlands starting in the 1940s. These smaller growers disagreed with "radical ideologies that had made inroads in other countries where agrarian wage earners were more prevalent, or where major landowners were foreigners.[44] Similarly, industrialization led to a migration of peasants to the cities—the foundation of a nascent working class.[45]

The coffee boom in the 1930s–1940s enabled coffee workers to cultivate their own small parcels of land. Additionally, they were able to legally organize and improve their contracts on large estates. These advances for coffee growers were indicative of the growth of unions nationwide. During this time, these unions became more politicized, leading up to the La Violencia clashes, from which the Colombian insurgencies grew. Both agricultural and economic policies hinged on the coffee economy, which consistently affected socioeconomic relations in Colombia, from labor rights to fair wages and land ownership. Booms

and busts in the coffee economy throughout Colombia's history have also corresponded to the decrease and increase of alternative crop cultivation, especially coca and marijuana. The coffee industry is also one of the best-organized resources, with large union representation in the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (FEDECAFE), or the National Federation of Coffee Growers, established in 1927. Given the dominance of coffee for domestic and international trade, FEDECAFE has had considerable influence over the Colombian government's economic policy. FEDCAFE has also become a strong partner in Colombia's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, providing employment for demobilized fighters and promoting a brand called El Café de la Reconciliación (Reconciliation Coffee).

Oil and Gas

Like the coca economy, the oil and gas industry became more relevant after the main Colombian insurgencies had already settled in the area. Although crude oil production had existed since the early 1900s, enhanced production of this natural resource greatly expanded in the mid-1980s. To the guerrillas, Colombian oil represented the worst in capitalism; they believed it led to the subjugation of the poor. The oil companies were either American or tied to American markets, which was counter to the anti-imperialist tenets of the leftist guerrillas. In 1987, Colombia had more than 8,300 kilometers of oil pipeline in addition to its production and refinery capacity.[46] Between 1986 and February 1991, more than 650,000 barrels of oil were spilled as a result of FARC attacks, especially because the pipelines were difficult to defend.[47] These events highlight the vulnerability of trading such valuable natural resources and the opportunities these resources offer insurgent groups who can exploit their supply-chain vulnerabilities for both monetary gain, through illicit trafficking in the diverted goods, and political leverage.

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CHAPTER 5.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The strong democratic tradition embodied in Colombia, interspersed with bouts of political violence, is one of the distinguishing features of the country's political system. Some have called this mixture of violence and democracy, prevalent throughout much of Latin America, "violent pluralism."[1]

Several institutional factors impacted political violence in Colombia during the mid-twentieth century. A long history of two-party competition structured the political system and provided channels to connect local grievances with national causes. Paradoxically, this national two-party system helped keep conflict localized because it gave subnational actors the resources to solve their problems within their own regions and municipalities. After a nineteenth century during which the two parties alternated power frequently, whether by ballot or by bullets, the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by a long period of peace. This peace was secured through one-party domination of the political system for multiple presidential terms. The Conservatives held power from 1902 to 1930, before ceding to the Liberals, who controlled the presidency from 1930 to 1946.

During this latter period, the seeds were sown for a larger conflict that would engulf Colombia in one of the more violent and protracted civil wars in Latin American history. Known as La Violencia, this period would see between 100,000 and 200,000 people killed between 1946 and the early 1960s. The guerrilla groups that have fought the Colombian state since the 1960s have their origins in La Violencia. Understanding the genesis and aftermath of this episode is central to understanding Colombian government and politics in the twentieth century.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

For the majority of the twentieth century, Colombia had the same constitution, a document adopted in 1886 that gave broad powers to the central government and intentionally sought to curb the power of regions. The executive office, perched at the apex of a top-down hierarchy, directly or indirectly controlled the appointment of a vast network of government and bureaucratic positions at the national, regional, and local levels. When married with the strong clientelist tradition in Colombia, control of the executive office was critical to maintaining power at the national, regional, and local levels of government.

Table 5-1. The relationships of political authority in Colombia in the early twentieth century.

	Executive	Legislative
National	President (elected)	Congress (elected)
State	Governors (appointed by the president)	State assemblies (elected)
Local	Mayors (appointed by governors)	Municipal councils (elected)

Reproduced with permission from Christopher Michael Cardona, "Politicians, Soldiers, and Cops: Colombia's 'La Violencia' in Comparative Perspective" (doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2008), 118.

Table 5-1 above describes the relationships of authority in the Colombian government in the early twentieth century. The table underscores the president's downward stream of control over state and local governments. Whereas the president was elected by popular vote, he appointed state governors. In turn, the governors had the authority to appoint local mayors.

This centralized authority of the executive office conferred tremendous influence to the political party that controlled the presidency. The permeation of patron–client relations, or clientelism, in Colombian politics compounded this centralization of power in the executive office. Clientelism has been a constant in Colombian politics since colonial times. In this tradition, patrons and clients assure the maximum benefit from any and all assets under their control "by personally exchanging these assets among themselves."[2] The patron–client network acts as a mechanism to distribute public goods and services to citizens in exchange for political support—in essence, vote buying. Under optimal conditions, governments allocate public goods and services equally to all citizens unless distributed differentially according to public rules of distribution with no obligation for political support.[3]

Beginning with social reforms in the late nineteenth century, the patron–client system adopted a more institutionalized structure. In its most basic traditional form, clientelism involved patrons of higher social strata in a reciprocal relationship of obligation with their clients in lower social strata. John Martz describes the relationship as an exchange of "labor, service, and general allegiance" for "[h]ousing, food, equipment, and specific usage of land."[4]

As Colombia modernized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its institutions of state governance developed as well. The values underpinning clientelism influenced the adoption of social reforms such as social security and public housing, expanding the perception

of the state as the definitive patron. The traditional patrons, in turn, acted more as brokers between bureaucratic institutions distributing state largesse and their clients, typically party members.[5] The adoption of the heavily centralized 1886 constitution, which established the top-down appointment model illustrated in Table 5-1, helped to consolidate the reach and authority of the dominant political parties, which based their strength on the patron–client ties they developed among their national, state, and local brokers.

Because of the significant benefits to the party that controlled the presidency under the 1886 constitution, the value of the presidency was significant. The losing party, on the other hand, faced disenfranchisement from a variety of political institutions as a result of the far-reaching political control afforded the party winning the presidency.

Before La Violencia, the presidency changed hands on two occasions, once in 1930 and again in 1946. In both elections, party infighting led to a split presidential ticket. As can be seen in Table 5-2, the split ticket resulted in a victory for the opposing party despite the party not gaining the majority of the vote.

Table 5-2. Presidential split tickets of 1930 and 1946.

	1930			**1946**		
	Liberal	**Cons.**		**Liberal**		**Cons.**
Candidate (total % of vote)	**Olaya** (32.7)	Válencia (29.1)	Vázquez (25.8)	Gaitán (26.3)	Turbay (32.3)	**Ospina** (41.4)
Total % of party vote	32.7	54.9		58.6		41.4

The winning candidate's name is bolded. Cons., Conservative.
Based on Richard L. Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973), 8.

These moments of partisan transition were flashpoints for armed unrest in the countryside. When the Liberal Party took control of the presidency in the 1930 presidential elections, ending decades of Conservative rule, skirmishes broke out in rural areas because Conservative leaders were reluctant to give way to their Liberal successors. This insurrection took on a much wider scope following the 1946 presidential election, in which the Conservatives regained control of the presidency. The dynamics of reprisal in the aftermath of the 1946 elections coalesced into a localized civil war within several years. This legacy of organized violence in the countryside directly impacted the development of leftist guerrilla insurgencies during the 1960s and 1970s.

The configuration of the Colombian security forces at the time of La Violencia also exacerbated partisan violence. This configuration, developed during a critical juncture of state formation in Colombia, 1880–1910, endured through much of the civil war. During the state formation period, subnational politicians gained control of local police,[a] resulting in politicized police forces whose loyalty to the ruling government was not guaranteed. Oftentimes, police sided with insurrectionists rather than enforcing law and order. The result was a widespread, enduring, locally driven conflict.[7]

THE SPLIT PRESIDENTIAL TICKET OF 1930: THE ASCENDANCY OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

In the 1930 presidential elections, a fissure in the ruling Conservative Party occasioned a split ticket. The Conservatives lost the presidential election to the Liberals, ushering in the first major electoral transition of the twentieth century. The Liberal Party launched a systematic effort to claim the network of patronage government and bureaucratic positions for its supporters, replacing the Conservatives already occupying the positions. The party also enacted a series of controversial social reforms that evidenced the influence of its large populist constituent base. Factional infighting over the extent of those reforms led to a split within the party that Conservatives later exploited.

But in 1930, with a presidential election looming, it was Liberals who took advantage of a split in the opposing party. Two Conservatives, Alfredo Vázquez Cobo and Guillermo León Valencia, were vying for the presidential candidacy. Whereas Vázquez drew support from the church and the military, León relied on support from the Conservative Party. Recognizing the opportunity to exploit the rift, the Liberals quickly fielded candidate Enrique Olaya Herrera, the ambassador to the United States, who was elected to the presidency.[8]

Major electoral transitions, such as those that occurred in 1930 and later in 1946, led to the systematic replacement of opposition party members holding political and bureaucratic posts at virtually all levels of government. Typically, there was a lag between the installment of the incoming party and the replacement of opposition party members downstream. Negotiations between national and regional leaders over the appointments account for the lag time. Local appointments were negotiated between the governor and local politicians, with input from

[a] The police include forces at the national, regional, and local levels and other related institutions, "investigative and judicial police; military police; federal bureaus of investigation; intelligence agencies; border patrols; highway patrols; customs agencies; and anti-narcotic agencies."[6]

local and state police chiefs.[9] Department governors acted as brokers between national and local governments. The Conservative governor of Antioquia, for instance, was not replaced with a Liberal until several years after the electoral transition of 1930. Predictably, the negotiations were fractious. In some areas, after the nationwide electoral transition of 1930, low-level hostilities broke out. These local struggles recurred, and expanded, during La Violencia, alongside other locally generated conflicts.[10] After the Liberals gained the presidency in 1930, a number of social reforms increased the state's level of intervention in society, swelling the bureaucratic ranks further. The party created new bureaucratic departments "to control business, taxation, customs houses, social services, [and the] armed forces." These expansions increased the payoffs for the victorious party but increased the cost of defeat for the losing party.[11]

Liberals viewed Olaya's election as a national mandate to implement its vision of the "Liberal Republic." Liberals replaced Conservatives in governing positions at the local, regional, and national levels—a "thorough housecleaning." Some Liberals were quite vocal, and brash, in announcing their intentions to root out every vestige of Conservative rule in the country.[12] Liberals used a variety of tactics—intimidation, voting fraud, and the use of bureaucracy to deny Conservative representation at even the municipal level, among others—to accomplish the party's goal.

The Liberals' return to power in 1930 coincided with shifts in the social landscape of Colombia. Many rural Colombians had begun to migrate to urban centers, leading to the transformation of Colombia from a rural-based to an urban-based society. Most migrants from the rural countryside moved to the largest urban centers in Colombia, such as Bogotá and Cali. By the 1920s, the population of Bogotá had increased by nearly half.[13] The shifts increased the pressure on already burdened public services while the cost of living increased. Colombia was transforming into an industrialized economy, a process more pronounced in some regions than others. These factors combined to empower a vocal underclass that demanded more effective representation and visibility in the political process.

After Olaya was elected, he introduced policies that addressed these new demands. In general, the Colombian state adopted a more centralized and interventionist role, acting as a mediator between competing claims of various social and economic interest groups in society. One of the pressing issues during this time was the issue of land reform, a topic discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 4. Socioeconomic Conditions*. After the 1920s brought an economic downturn to the country, as they did to most places in the world, Colombians began to look toward the

open frontiers of the countryside to escape economic degradation. Colonists flocked to different regions, encouraged by the government, hoping to claim portions of the vast public lands still available for settlement. When they arrived, many found that the lands were already occupied—in their minds illegally. Large-scale cattle ranchers, commercial agriculture enterprises, and others had whittled away at public lands to increase their own holdings. The landless competed with these powerful landholders, and other hopeful colonists, over the lands. In some regions, such as centrally located Tolima, the "land invasions" perpetrated by colonists on the *haciendas* resulted in armed conflict.[14]

The Liberal Party, especially President Alfonso López Pumarejo in his first term (1934–1938), initiated reforms to mediate the agrarian unrest. In 1936, López enacted Law 200, which upheld the right of the person who could show that they resided on the property and made improvements to hold the legal title to the property. Conflict over land did diminish after the passage of Law 200, but its terms granted only a limited number of "squatter's rights."[15]

The Liberal regime enacted many such social reforms. López called his ambitious reform program the "Revolution on the March." López's reforms that were most unpopular with the political and economic elite were not the relatively benign property reforms but the legalization of labor organizations. Known Communists headed some of the labor unions, even in strategic sections such as oil. Before this era, Colombian politics was restricted to a narrow circle of elites. With the Liberal Party's support of the lower classes, this restricted circle began to include other Colombians, such as those in the unions, historically removed from political considerations.

This new inclusion was especially the case with Colombians who were part of the rising urban and professional classes. These new leaders entered political life by appealing to the populist[b] interests of the emergent classes. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala, the presidential candidate whose assassination in 1948 helped jump-start La Violencia, is the quintessential example of this new type of leader. Gaitán's dark skin, humble birth, and powerful oratorical messages castigating the oligarchic elites who ruled Colombia made him an exceedingly popular figure with the common man but a dangerous one to the elite. In a situation not unlike the so-called "Red Scare" in the United States during the 1950s, members of both parties, along with the press, expressed fears

[b] *Populism* or *populist* are terms used to describe a style of politics that makes appeals to "the people" in order to challenge established political systems, especially established political parties, and the dominant values underlying them. Although in the United States populism is most often associated with the left, populist politics are not specific to any one ideology or end of the political spectrum. See Canovan.[16]

over the perceived slow creep of socialist and communist tendencies into national and local political life. The "vituperative red-baiting" that followed contributed to the partisan violence that began in the 1940s.[17]

Nervous Liberals backed a less radical presidential candidate, Eduardo Santos Montejo, in the election following López's first term. Santos rolled back many of the social reforms López had championed. However, López remained an important political figure and gained reelection to the presidency in 1942. His second term in office was troubled by Liberal Party infighting and fierce Conservative opposition, ultimately leading to a failed military coup in 1944. Because of these myriad concerns, López was eventually driven from the presidency in 1945. By the time López's successor, Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo, took office, the concerns expressed by many in the Liberal Party over the pace and tenor of López's social reforms had coalesced into a conservative social trend.

After gaining control of the presidency, Olaya and his Liberal successors also paid special attention to the police. Their policies aimed to increase the number of police as a counterweight to the army, which they believed would be more loyal to the Conservative Party. Because of these efforts, by the end of Olaya's first term in 1934, Liberal Party members swelled the ranks of the police, giving the institution a distinct partisan tone. One Conservative member described the transition:

> Into the National Police and the departmental guards entered delinquents and known wrongdoers and into a multitude of villages, characterized by their traditionalist fervor, were brought by evildoers for hire, duly armed, true mobs instructed in crime, whose mission consisted in attacking, pursing, and harming, if required, all those who did not share their political passion. Life became extremely difficult and it even became a heroic act to preserve one's life in many parts of Colombia. The country had not known such a period of cruelty and barbarity since the dark time of the Spanish reconquest.[18]

López nationalized the police forces of some departments but not all—notably, Antioquia, Norte de Santander, and Santander departments (a department in Colombia is the equivalent of a state in the United States) were not nationalized. The reform left the cost of the force with the departments but gave the National Police more jurisdiction over their local counterparts. However, even in those departments with more nationalized forces, governors still controlled most of the resources needed for the police. As a result, the forces remained fairly politicized.[19]

Liberals also sought to pack the police force with members of their own party. The resulting police force pursued local Liberal agendas in small towns throughout the country. Similar scenes such as the one that follows played out in small, remote towns throughout the country. In Santa Isabel, a town in the Tolima Department, a Liberal mayor installed by the governor after the Liberal takeover in 1930 reportedly terrorized local Conservatives with impunity. Concerned citizens carried reports to the governor of municipal police in the town who fired at will at Conservatives. Any complaints Conservatives chose to levy against the municipal police were registered in the municipal station while officers brandishing clubs and pistols surrounded the victims. Events escalated as early as 1939, when members of the Liberal police were accused of massacring a number of Conservatives in Gachetá, Cundinamarca. In response, the chief of the Conservative Party, Laureano Gómez, stormed the presidential palace to demand justice. His complaint to President López reflected the growing concern with security and legitimacy of the central government: "Understand that if the government does not fulfill its principal duty of guaranteeing human life, all of us will take to the streets in self-defense to see that we are not murdered with impunity."[20] In the view of partisans, the failure of the government to address the egregious violence erupting in the countryside was not only a matter of limited resources but also of will.

Gómez's refrain was consistently repeated by the opposition party in the twentieth century. In this instance, Gómez and his followers did adopt a more militant stance in the 1930s, citing the central government's failure to adequately govern and protect its citizenry. One Conservative, in protest against what he saw as impotent Conservative leadership, advocated agrarian terrorism as a tactic to combat the "Red Dictatorship" orchestrated by the "urban proletariat." A week later, the fiery Gómez announced that the party would henceforth adopt a new strategy, "Intrepid Action," which would "meet violence with violence." Reports to police stations and government representatives, complaints to party leaders, and other peaceful methods of redress gave way to force of arms to combat the opposition after the former proved ineffective. Conservatives across the country scrambled to arm themselves after the announcement.[21]

THE SPLIT PRESIDENTIAL TICKET OF 1946: THE RETURN OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

In the lead-up to the 1946 presidential elections, the Liberal Party had difficulty integrating the populist leader, Gaitán. He aimed to capture the Liberal presidential candidacy in the upcoming elections.

Previously, Gaitán had formed a political party, Unión Nacional Izquierdistat Revolucionaria (UNIR), or the Nationalist Leftist Revolutionary Union, which had had some success in parliamentary elections during the 1930s. Despite Gaitán's popularity with the Liberal rank and file, the Liberal Party leadership denied him the presidential nomination. Gaitán refused to accept the decision and began his own campaign, running in tandem with the official Liberal candidate, Gabriel Turbay Ayala. Gaitán was the undisputed champion of the common man and the dissenter within the Liberal Party. His Liberal rival, Turbay, represented the entrenched elite interests and was the official party candidate.[22]

When voters went to the polls in 1946, there were two Liberal presidential candidates from which to choose, splitting the Liberal vote. The Liberal split ticket coincided with a surprise end of Conservative abstentionism,[c] a tactic the party had used since 1935. After nearly two decades of rule, the Conservatives wrested power from the Liberals, much as the latter had done in 1930. The Conservative candidate, Mariano Ospina Pérez, was elected to the executive office with less than a majority of the vote.[23]

Ironically, Ospina himself ran on a bipartisan platform, promising the inclusion of Liberals in his cabinet, gubernatorial offices, and municipal offices. He established a "National Union" composed of members of both parties. Extremists in both parties decried Ospina's moderate position.[24] Ospina did initially appoint Liberal mayors and governors to Liberal strongholds, but the replacement of Conservatives with Liberals in departmental bureaucracy moved at a "perceptible pace."[25]

For a time, the tack proved sufficient in quelling partisan violence. As discussed above, the spoils system of Colombian politics meant that the party in control of the presidency also controlled many of the patronage jobs and local government positions appointed by the government. The party turnover meant a loss of resources and power, which was unacceptable, and frightening, to those in the opposition party. Figure 5-1 depicts the recurring partisan motivational pattern of political conflict following in Colombian politics, the subjective logic by which participants justified armed conflict.

[c] Abstentionism is a refusal to participate in government on the basis of the perceived illegitimacy of the political system.

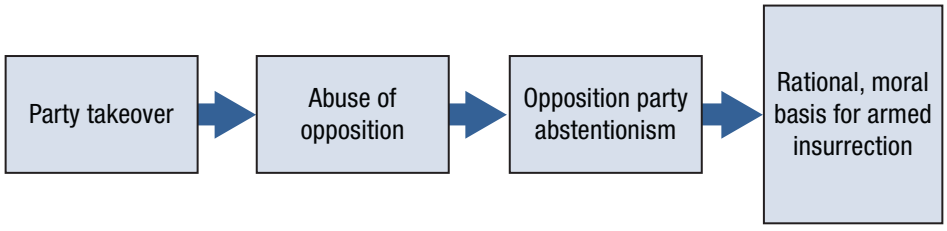

Figure 5-1. Recurring pattern of subjective partisan motivation in mid-twentieth-century Colombian politics.

The pattern depicted in the figure illustrates a cycle of partisan competition that hamstrung the ability of the central government to effectively govern. After securing a takeover of the presidency, the former opposition party, whether Liberal or Conservative, initiated a concerted effort to remove the members of the opposing party from positions of power and influence—sometimes through fraud and intimidation. In response, the opposition adopted a policy of abstentionism, or refusal to participate in a political system perceived to be illegitimate. By officially endorsing the illegitimacy of the ruling government, the abstentionist policy imparted to its proponents a rational, moral basis for armed insurrection.[26]

Loss of government legitimacy is often an important factor contributing to political violence. As discussed in *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, "a government has legitimacy when it is perceived as having both the right to rule and the competency to fulfill its expected functions."[27] Some of those key functions include security, justice, the fulfillment of economic needs, and ideological legitimacy. In the case of Colombia, the pattern of politics ensured that maintaining government legitimacy among members of the opposing party was a difficult endeavor.

The Conservative takeover in 1946, and the ensuing changeover produced by the spoils system of Colombian politics, contributed to eruptions of partisan violence in areas of the country that had a legacy of political polarization. Partisan violence during this time was especially concentrated in several departments of the Eastern Cordillera, including Boyacá, Santander, and Norte de Santander. Combined, the three departments covered twenty percent of Colombian territory and held nearly one-fifth of the country's population. The areas were also some of the most politically polarized in the country. Table 5-3 shows the increase in homicides in these departments during the late 1940s.

Table 5-3. Homicides per 100,000 residents in Colombian departments and intendencies, 1946–1960.

	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Antioquia	8.7	6.2	8.8	14.5	25.8	25.0	45.6	33.9	21.3	23.5	29.4	24.2	38.4	38.3	41.6
Atlántico	3.1	3.0	9.2	9.2	12.1	9.7	6.2	7.6	7.6	6.6	7.5	4.7	6.0	6.6	6.3
Bolívar	3.0	1.5	2.4	5.2	4.3	6.0	5.5	6.4	6.1	6.1	4.6	7.6	5.2	5.0	11.8
Boyacá	12.8	17.8	32.1	50.6	33.5	35.9	38.2	25.3	20.1	17.0	19.2	19.7	26.6	22.3	27.9
Caldas	6.6	7.9	14.1	29.0	30.1	34.7	37.0	41.8	42.2	51.8	59.5	91.0	117.0	81.1	43.5
Cauca	9.3	7.0	11.9	12.6	11.7	15.5	14.8	15.9	19.9	26.1	27.6	32.1	44.8	27.1	25.9
Córdoba	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.4	2.9	9.3	5.1	9.5	8.5	8.1	6.4	4.7
Cundinamarca	11.9	9.3	11.5	17.5	23.6	31.2	35.0	22.4	17.5	22.3	18.0	18.9	24.7	22.9	23.7
Chocó	–	–	1.8	3.6	9.8	13.3	18.6	5.9	8.1	3.6	14.3	12.1	14.7	10.4	11.0
Huila	6.0	3.8	8.5	12.2	10.0	23.2	18.4	59.0	50.9	47.6	99.9	47.3	68.3	21.8	31.9
Magdalena	5.3	6.3	12.1	17.9	17.2	14.9	9.5	17.9	15.1	12.2	11.5	14.1	14.2	12.5	11.8
Nariño	9.6	11.4	8.6	9.2	5.9	8.9	6.9	6.4	9.1	11.0	5.6	8.5	9.0	10.3	8.0
Norte de Santander	48.0	77.1	46.0	79.5	53.5	43.5	52.0	51.0	46.3	47.7	51.5	49.6	62.7	66.4	56.8
Santander	16.1	30.0	40.3	86.5	37.4	43.5	57.0	46.9	36.1	40.2	41.9	36.2	59.0	50.6	56.0
Tolima	8.5	7.2	11.4	13.9	31.2	47.6	86.7	63.4	47.9	98.1	164.1	115.6	133.7	100.7	62.8
Valle [del Cauca]	19.4	16.7	21.6	69.3	76.2	68.1	83.5	44.9	33.1	57.0	54.6	87.5	97.3	62.4	51.2
Intendencies	14.5	5.7	15.2	27.1	35.3	45.7	60.9	40.3	20.4	24.4	21.2	28.8	27.4	29.6	27.9

Source: Colombia, Ministerio de Justicia, Cinco años, anexo, 41, in James D. Henderson, *When Colombia Bled: A History of the Violencia in Tolima* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 254.

In Boyacá, the rate of homicides per 100,000 residents increased from 12.8 in 1946 to 32.1 in 1948, peaking during this decade at 50.6 in 1949. Similarly, in troubled Norte de Santander, the rate of homicides increased from an already elevated 48.0 in 1946 to a high of 79.5 in 1949. Indeed, as part of a pattern of escalating local violence that did not aggregate up to the national level, Norte de Santander experienced a small-scale civil war in 1948 when Conservatives and Liberals shot each other for two weeks before being separated by the national army. Santander saw an even more dramatic rise, from 16.1 homicides per 100,000 residents in 1946 to a high of 86.5 in 1949—a fivefold increase. Many of the Conservatives in these areas still remembered their persecution at the hands of Liberals after the Liberal takeover of government in the 1930s.[28]

Other areas, such as the department of Tolima, were able to escape immediate violence. In regions less prone to violence during this period, Liberals managed to maintain control over municipal governments. However, even in these less violence-prone areas, modern means of communication ensured that residents there were aware of the political violence plaguing other regions. Media reports filtering news of the violence frequently did so in distinctly partisan tones, making prodigious use of "doomsday rhetoric." Liberal Party spokespersons in Bogotá used every incident, and the seeming inability or will of the central government to halt the violence, as evidence of "Conservative barbarism" in an effort to discredit and delegitimize Ospina's rule and the central government. Thus, residents of remote villages, even if they were not experiencing the violence firsthand, vigorously protested the "outrages" to their congressional representatives.[29]

The politicization of the police force, discussed previously in this chapter, also contributed to the eruption and continuation of partisan violence. After taking the presidency in 1946, Ospina was troubled about the lack of control he had over such an important security institution. Indeed, Conservative Party chief Gómez referred to it as "the enemy police force."

During its sixteen years of rule, the Liberal Party had filled the National Police with officers from its party, many of whom were now hostile to the Conservative leadership and happy to sabotage its efforts to maintain control. In some areas, Liberal police officers resigned in droves, leaving the force woefully understaffed. In other instances, the police simply failed to enforce peace and order. In 1946, during a public disturbance in Bogotá spearheaded by leftist transportation workers protesting gasoline rationing, workers blocked streets and damaged public and private property.[30] The police commander, sympathetic to

the Liberal rioters, refused to take action against the unruly crowds. President Ospina later called on the national army to halt the violence.[31]

The predictable Conservative response to incidents such as these was to cleanse the police of Liberal sympathies. Ospina's administration fired the Liberal police commander, replacing him with a Conservative. In other regions, rank-and-file Liberal policemen were also systematically fired for their partisan affiliations and gradually replaced with Conservatives. By the time of Gaitán's assassination in 1948, fearful Liberals in the mountains of northern Tolima referred to the National Police, stationed in their towns by edicts from Bogotá, as the *policiá chulavita*.[32,d] Ospina had recruited the *policiá chulavita* from Conservative strongholds after it became apparent that the police stationed in Bogotá were disloyal to the central government. He sent the *policiá chulavita* to the departments where Gaitán's followers were prevalent and vocal, such as Valle del Cauca and Tolima. The Conservative policemen attacked local Liberals, sometimes massacring them, initiating a chain of vicious reprisals that escalated into La Violencia.[33]

Conservatives were not picky about the quality of the men replacing Liberal police, at times staffing local forces with criminals. In one instance, a regional authority sent a recommendation to a local police chief for a man who was a convicted killer and cattle thief. The police, ostensibly the defenders of order and security for the Colombian populace, were often the perpetrators of crimes, from homicide to thievery. By mid-1947, the Conservative-dominated police force in some departments was arming "trustworthy" Conservative citizens, while Liberals were receiving arms shipments from bordering Venezuela.[34]

Even as they pursued partisan agendas at the local level through manipulation of the security forces, President Ospina and other moderates did attempt to calm the coming political storm. But ultimately the extremist positions in both parties continued to drive events in Colombia. In 1947, Ospina established a bipartisan commission to investigate partisan violence. The commission included both Gómez and Gaitán, leaders of the Conservative and Liberal parties, respectively. Unfortunately for Colombia, saddled with weak political institutions incapable of sustaining peacekeeping measures, the accord lasted about a week. Years of heated polemical bickering between the two leading figures made it exceedingly difficult for these politicians to execute an about-face and relinquish the demagoguery that had proven enormously successful in building solid networks of supporters.

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[d] The name refers to the village in the Boyacá Department where the police had originally been recruited.

The vitriol exchanged at the national level was mirrored in regional institutions, where heated debates between Liberals and Conservatives often degenerated into displays of weapon brandishing or outright violence. In a sign of the times, a shoulder holster was de rigueur for the "well-dressed" Colombian legislator of the 1940s.[35] By 1947, even representatives of the national legislature were carrying revolvers. By March of that year, Gaitán had declared Ospina's National Front government illegitimate and refused to collaborate. He encouraged every Liberal in the country who held a political position to resign immediately, reinitiating the dynamic of abstentionism. Liberals across many departments, including remaining Liberal police officers, heeded the call and resigned, leaving chaos in their wake as regional institutions had insufficient staff to administer and govern. Moderates in the National Assembly censured Gaitán's "illogical" move, to no effect.[36]

Burdened with a disastrously ineffective central government, many Liberals in Colombia turned to their beloved party leader, Gaitán, for guidance and redress. After the 1946 elections, Gaitán's influence and popularity grew. Liberal adherents to his program gained seats across the country in the 1947 parliamentary elections, creating Liberal majorities in the national Congress and in nine of the fourteen state assemblies. Gaitán's success propelled him to the head of the Liberal Party. Under his leadership, the Liberal Party incorporated the labor movement, including not just workers but "all those sectors marginalized from production and wealth."[37]

In the wake of the failed accord of 1947 to investigate incidents of political violence, Gaitán appealed to Ospina and national leaders to halt the violence. Gaitán, who closely studied the oratorical style of Mussolini while in Italy, was especially adept at stoking crowds to a fever pitch, vowing to defend the common man against powerful and corrupt oligarchs of the Conservative Party. He finished each speech with the challenge, "If I lead, follow me; if I falter, give me strength; if they kill me, avenge me! Charge!"[38]

The 1948 Assassination of Gaitán and the Escalation of Partisan Violence

Gaitán's challenge was eerily prescient. In April 1948, a mentally disturbed gunman, Juan Roa Sierra, assassinated the charismatic Liberal presidential candidate and party chief. After shooting Gaitán, Roa was hunted down by members of an angry mob who beat and stabbed the assassin to death, then deposited his corpse in front of the presidential palace. Gaitán's death, on the eve of the founding of the Organization of American States (OAS), has engendered much speculation.

Even Fidel Castro, in attendance at the conference that established the OAS, was briefly investigated for the crime. Gaitán was reportedly on his way to lunch with the future leader of the Cuban Revolution.

Gaitán's death set off a series of riots, the *Bogotazo*, which left portions of Bogotá in charred ruins. This urban unrest did not last long—especially as compared with the conflict in the countryside.

While the relatively short-lived *Bogotazo* riots in the capital wound down, the uprising by "Gaitánistas" in the rural countryside evinced "organization and growing complexity."[39] Leftist students and other agitators used public radio broadcasts to foment Liberal violence against the Conservative government:

> The Conservatives and the government have just assassinated Gaitán . . . comrades of Cauca and the Santanderes, now is the time to unsheathe your machetes because it is time to be glorious as you were in times past. . . . At this moment Bogotá is a sea of flames, as was the Rome of Nero. . . . the corpse of [Conservative leader] Guillermo León Valencia is hanging from a pillar in the Plaza de Bolívar. . . . The buildings of the assassin government are burning. The people are raising an uncontrollable cry for vengeance of their chief by dragging the corpse of [President] Ospina Pérez through the streets. Arm yourselves; take the hardware store and arm yourselves.[40]

Of course, although portions of Bogotá were indeed in flames, neither the president nor any high-ranking Conservative officials had been killed in retaliation. Similar inflammatory statements urging Liberals to "arm themselves" and kill Conservatives were broadcast over the national radio. Angry Liberals ripped Conservatives from their homes and businesses, killing them and destroying property. In one instance, in Armero, Tolima, an angry Liberal mob attacked a parish priest, hacking him to death with a machete on suspicion of harboring Conservative weapons in his church. Many were convinced that Conservatives had large weapon caches and were preparing to tyrannize their Liberal compatriots. Vague rumors of impending large-scale attacks against Liberals also proliferated, further stoking fear and anger. Despite the agitation, only one governor, Gonzalo París Lozano of Tolima, openly declared revolution against the central government, even allowing the revolutionary junta to operate out of his offices. Liberals founded revolutionary committees in many Liberal-dominated municipalities, some of which acted responsibly to deter violence against Conservative citizens and maintain order.[41]

Ospina eventually restored order through the national army. He initiated limited reprisals against Liberal agitators, but he did replace a number of municipal officials with Conservatives loyal to his government. The move was a blow to Liberals, who lost a great deal of bureaucratic power as a result. Liberal political officials, including Governor París, made peace with Ospina and returned to the fold of the National Union.

The violence after Gaitán's assassination had also served to increase tension between Conservative and Liberal neighbors—the former viewing the latter as capable of barbarous acts at a moment's notice. Fears of reprisal were not unfounded and ran both ways. According to Henderson, after the assassination of Gaitán, one Liberal resident of Tolima was caught and killed by a Conservative who sold his flesh for *chicharrón*[e] while young boys played soccer with his decapitated head.[42] Examples of such violence and cruelty not only took place as the country descended into La Violencia, but also became part of how historians and the press documented the conflict. Vivid, almost lurid examples of violence such as the ones cited in this paragraph became part of the narrative of La Violencia, for protagonists and documenters alike, and served to demarcate it as a distinctive period in Colombian history.

The Deterioration of National Politics in the Late 1940s

The presidential election scheduled for 1949, like the assassination of Gaitán, proved to be a precipitating event that escalated violence. Liberals took advantage of growing demographic strength to make strong electoral inroads. The threat of an imminent Liberal victory in 1949 led Conservatives to shut down normal democratic procedure.

For some time, the Liberal Party had been increasing its ranks. As a result of both violence and poor economic opportunity, the Colombian countryside emptied as many Colombians migrated to the urban centers of Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. The urbanization trend favored Liberals as the party had long enjoyed dominance in larger cities.

In the 1940s, Liberals formed the clear majority, an especially worrisome revelation for Conservatives. The Liberal Party majority represented a clear and present threat to the constitutional order the Conservatives had nurtured after the close of the nineteenth-century civil wars. The bedrock of the constitutional order was the Conservative Party principles of "close church-state relations, governmental centralism, and limited state intervention in economic affairs."[43]

[e] Pork rinds, a common fried street snack.

Conservatives, already convinced that the riots after Gaitán's assassination were part and parcel of a subversive Communist plot, increased their efforts to maintain hold of the presidency, whether through means fair or foul. The Conservatives had a powerful weapon in the form of Laureano Gómez, an extremist Conservative who alternately struck fear and hatred in the hearts of Liberals. Gómez had fled Colombia to Spain during the *Bogotazo* riots, fearing for his life.[44] After learning of the Liberal Party's electoral triumph in 1949, Gómez vowed to return to Colombia as a presidential candidate in the coming elections of 1950.

His incendiary rhetoric made Gómez an implacable enemy of the Liberal opposition. After returning to Colombia in June, Gómez gave a famous speech in which he likened the Liberal opposition to a mythical beast, the basilisk:

> Our basilisk walks on feet of confusion and naiveté, on legs of abuse and violence, with an immense oligarchic stomach, with a chest of rage, with Masonic arms and a tiny communist head . . . This creation is the result of intellectual reasoning. It is the conclusion one reaches through consideration of recent events, in the manner of a chemist in a laboratory who studies the reactions in order to reach a conclusion . . . the *nueve de abril*[f] was a typically communist phenomenon, but one carried out by the basilisk.[45]

Gómez's extremism and intransigence rendered nil any hope of bipartisan cooperation to calm the violence sweeping the countryside.

In response, the Liberal Party mounted an offensive campaign to prevent Gómez's election. Determined to win the upcoming elections, the Conservative Party responded in kind. Conservatives had significant advantages over their Liberal counterparts as the former now controlled most government positions. As a result, Conservatives were able to turn to the police as a potent weapon to wield against Liberals. The party swept all remaining Liberals out of the police's ranks, replacing officers with any able body sympathetic to the Conservative cause. The Conservative officers quickly proved their loyalty by shooting to death several Liberals halted at a temporary checkpoint in the department of Tolima. Other less deadly acts of intimidation and harassment followed.

After the Colombian Supreme Court approved an earlier presidential election, in 1949 rather than 1950, Conservative leadership at the national level urged its members to step up efforts to stamp out the supposed Communist threat from Liberals. Local Conservatives

[f] A reference to April 9, 1948, the day of Gaitán's assassination.

interpreted the directive broadly, firing Liberals in any remaining official positions; harassing Liberal citizens; and dispatching additional police, by now very partisan, to Liberal strongholds. Many Liberals fled in fear, aiding Conservatives' quest for electoral domination.

Liberal national leadership debated the appropriate response to the outrages committed by Conservatives. One faction sought to encourage healthier bipartisan cooperation to halt the violence, while a more extremist faction refused any level of collaboration with the opposing party.

The issue came to a head in October 1949, a month before the moved-up presidential election. Official records indicated that Liberals in one-seventh of Colombian territory were prevented from registering for the upcoming vote. Gómez, apparently unsatisfied with a mere electoral victory, issued a statement indicating that if elected, he would refuse any semblance of power sharing with the Liberals. These events decided the Liberals' course of action—abstaining from the presidential election and attempting to impeach President Ospina. The president responded by declaring martial law. A month later, in the wake of Liberal abstentionism, voters elected Gómez to the presidency. Liberal leadership made a clumsy attempt at a general strike, hoping the national army would mount a coup to restore order, but they were unsuccessful.[46]

As promised, Gómez made his presidency into a "relentlessly anti-Liberal Party" force. He denounced the Liberal Party as the agent of destruction of traditional Catholic values and hierarchical social status. After dismissing the Congress, he installed a Constitutional Convention aimed at rolling back the Liberal political and social reforms initiated in the 1930s. One historian suggests that Gómez's extreme methods of implementing the Conservative vision of Colombia were ironically responsible, in part, for the effects he hoped to avoid. Violence erupting in the countryside accelerated the migration of rural Colombians to cities, where the Liberal Party held sway. Additionally, the violence led to social disruptions and migrations that broke down the values underlying the traditions of privilege and wealth for the elite and limited social mobility for lower social classes. Members of the lower classes from both parties, heretofore excluded from the circles of power and influence, became warriors and leaders of rural society.[47]

The near total collapse of the central government in 1949 is referred to as an "institutional heart attack." The Liberals' earlier refusal to participate in the elections, and the Conservatives' similar refusal to include Liberals in the national government, left millions of Liberal Colombians without any effective representation in the central government: "[Liberals'] clumsy attempts to seize power threw their party in

such disarray that it would not play a significant role in politics for half a decade. Some six million partisans, severely compromised by their leaders, were suddenly left to their own devices and were unrepresented in Bogotá."[48]

The impact of the institutional heart attack is apparent when reviewing statistics on countrywide violence. Returning to Table 5-3, an uptick in homicides in several departments in 1949 is readily apparent. In Boyacá, the number of homicides increased from 32.1 in 1948 to 50.6 in 1949. In Santander, homicides jumped twofold in 1949, from 40.3 in 1948 to 86.5 in 1949. Traditional antipathies, alongside the abject failure of democratic institutions to address differences peacefully, led to a sustained period of civil conflict in the countrywide known as La Violencia, or simply "The Violence."

LA VIOLENCIA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Confined primarily to the countryside, La Violencia was fueled by a mixture of local grievances, national demagoguery, and sheer banditry. Over the course of two decades, 1946–1966, an estimated 100,000–200,000 people were killed.[g]

After the institutional heart attack of 1949 and Gómez's election, La Violencia surged into high gear, reaching a crescendo in the early 1950s. Political leadership in both parties orchestrated peasant attacks against elites in the opposing camp. Faced with a known extremist Conservative president, a heavily partisan police force, and an indifferent national army, Liberals embarked on a policy of muted armed insurrection. Rather than leading insurgents in the field, however, Liberal political leaders in the capital instructed their followers to instigate rebellions in the countryside. The result was a curiously leaderless, localized rebellion that would continue in rural communities for the next two decades.

La Violencia continues to have a profound impact on Colombia, and its study is a necessary precursor to understanding Colombia's current cycle of violence driven by leftist guerrillas, narcoterrorists, and right-wing paramilitaries. Indeed, many of the insurgent organizations still active in the country today, including the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), have roots in the conflict. The FARC emerged from the militias fighting in La Violencia in the eastern plains of Colombia in the 1950s. From 1949 until 1953, an estimated 20,000 Colombians joined the Liberal guerrillas that eventually

[g] Researchers debate the number of people killed during the conflict. Estimates typically run from a low of 100,000 to a high of 200,000.

evolved into the FARC. In addition, the rampant insecurity during the conflict encouraged Conservative landowners to form self-defense groups, or private militias, of "worthy" citizens which were the predecessors to right-wing Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) paramilitaries currently battling guerrilla groups. After the initial partisan impetus, much of the violence degenerated into common criminality and banditry. In all, about 129 guerrilla and bandit groups operated in the Colombian countryside. By 1963, after the violence began to noticeably dwindle, thirty-six percent, or forty-seven, of those bands were still operative. Others retired, taking advantage of the amnesty the national government eventually offered the guerrillas.[49]

Most tragically, the conflict also displaced millions of Colombians, many of whom fled to the cities and have not returned to their rural homes. As recently as 2002, a humanitarian worker interviewing displaced Colombians noted that he repeatedly received the same answer when asking what had made them flee their rural homes: La Violencia.[50]

While La Violencia endured for two decades, the trajectory of the conflict shifted several times, resulting in four recognizable phases of the violence. The first phase was between the presidential election of 1946 and Gaitán's assassination. This period was characterized by low levels of partisan-inspired violence. The next phase, during which the highest levels of violence occurred, followed Gaitán's 1948 assassination and lasted until the imposition of military rule in 1953. The period of military rule, from June 1953 to August 1958, is a third phase. The fourth and final phase of La Violencia began after the adoption of the National Front in August 1958, a bipartisan power-sharing agreement that rotated power between Conservatives and Liberals and lasted until 1966, widely regarded as the official conclusion of the conflict.[51]

The traditional narrative of La Violencia depicts it as a partisan struggle between Liberals and Conservatives, but recent research has pointed to the importance of local grievances as motivators for the conflict. In some areas caught up in La Violencia, this partisan cleavage continued to explain motivations for the violence. Yet, scholars that have researched the conflict at the more granular local level have shown that the violence did not always obey the "master cleavage" often thought to have dictated the trajectory of the conflict. Political scientist Stathis Kalyvas has noted that civil wars are often mistakenly conceptualized as "binary conflicts" between two unitary actors (Liberals and Conservatives in the case of Colombia). When investigating La Violencia at the local level, however, often it is the local, not national, concerns that are the primary drivers of conflict. At the local level, violence among belligerents, for instance, might have been more closely related to personal grudges and family feuds than to political identities such

as "Liberal" or "Conservative." Widespread violence and the disruption of state and local security institutions offer an ideal cover for settling such private disputes. The result is a much messier, ambiguous, complex affair than the typical binary conflict suggests. As Kalyvas notes, "ambiguity is endemic to civil wars."[52] Figure 5-2 illustrates the dynamics of civil war, taking into consideration the role the local context plays in proliferating the armed struggle.

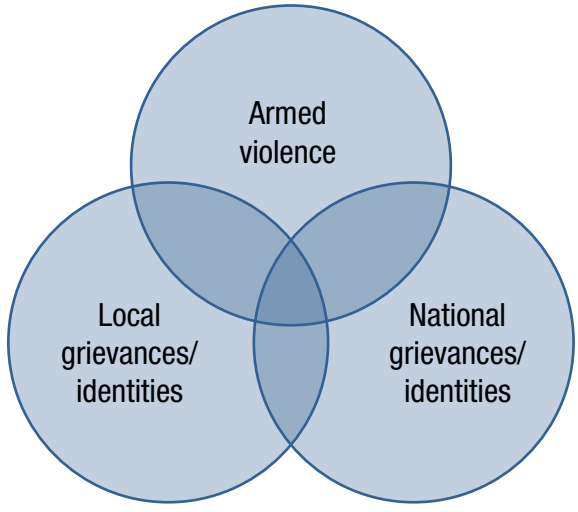

Figure 5-2. Venn diagram illustrating the complexity of civil war dynamics.

In Figure 5-2, civil war is at the intersection of local and national grievances. Understanding the master cleavage of a civil war, whether Sunni versus Shia in Iraq or Liberals versus Conservatives in Colombia, does not always provide the careful observer with leverage when analyzing conflict at the micro-level (such as a village). A historian researching the impact of local issues and grievances in the dynamics of La Violencia observed that recruitment into guerrilla bands in one Colombian locality was based on kin-based networks. The nominally "Liberal" guerrilla bands battled "Conservative" police forces and paramilitaries, often called *contrachusma*. The apparent clear partisan divide, which maps to the master cleavage of La Violencia, is muddied by a closer examination of the local issues surrounding the factions. The struggle also mapped to feuds between various families. The picture was further complicated by the possibility of dual party affiliations. In some cases, individual family members held dual party affiliations—that is, they identified with both Liberals and Conservatives—attributable especially to marriage. As a result of these intersecting identities, some

Conservatives actually joined the guerrilla groups.[53,h] Cardona, as part of an evolving historiography of La Violencia that includes Roldán and seeks to delve deeper than traditional explanations that rely on partisan politics, depicted La Violencia as a series of local insurrections that never quite reached the level of a national conflict.[55]

During the course of the conflict, the character and motivation of armed struggle evolved. For example, in southwest Antioquia near the town of Urrao, the base of the Liberal guerilla group headed by the famous Captain Franco, patterns of violence during La Violencia followed the classic Liberal and Conservative partisan divide. After several years of intermittent violence, the aims of Liberal guerrilla groups, even if poorly articulated, took on socioeconomic overtones as the guerrillas began a land usurpation campaign. Guerrillas not only occupied the land, but they also alternated warfighting with sowing and harvesting the land. The violence became "a struggle over who should have the right to inhabit, control, or farm particular areas." This turn encouraged a more vigorous response by the regional government, which was concerned about the struggle's economic—even Communist—overtones, as opposed to the purely partisan motivations that had driven the conflict previously.[56] Echoing the anti-Communist fervor in the United States during this time, Colombian officials exhibited strong concern for infiltration by the "Red" menace. To date, little evidence suggests that there was any widespread support for Communism in the area.[57]

La Violencia and Security Force Configuration

One of the most profound failures of the central government during La Violencia, and the years leading up to it, was its inability to protect average Colombians from violence. The preceding narrative describing the events leading up to the outbreak of La Violencia alludes to the role police forces played in spreading insecurity, especially in the countryside. This section delves further into how the institutional design[i] of the security forces[j] influenced the behavior of actors involved in the

[h] This depiction of the relative fluidity of partisan identity contrasts with other interpretations, which cast the Liberal and Conservative identities as primordial "hereditary hatreds." In this latter depiction, Colombians' partisan identity is a birthright in which any fluidity is untenable. See Dix.[54]

[i] Institutions can be described as a system of constraints that "structure political, economic, and social interaction." These constraints can derive from formal rules, such as from a constitution or a law, or from more informal rules, such as customs, traditions, or general unspoken codes of conduct.[58]

[j] The security forces include "armed groups sanctioned, organized, controlled, and paid by the state to provide internal security and order within the national territory."[59]

conflict. The resulting behaviors impacted the scope, endurance, and locality of the civil war.[k]

During a critical period in the formation of the Colombia state—1880–1910[l]—the design of the military and nascent National Police emerged as a politicized security force configuration, a term defined in greater detail below. Political elites, during a time of heightened concern for centralization after a period of internal strife had disordered Colombia in the 1860s, established the police force by following the model the French gendarmerie had favored. The two salient characteristics of the French model, centralization and militarization, ultimately did not survive the realities of regionalism and *bipartidismo*. For the first twenty years after its founding in 1891, the National Police did not leave the capital. This lack of presence in rural areas resulted directly from a bargain with local politicians, who had no wish for a police force imposed by Bogotá. Ultimately, centralization and militarization were discarded in favor of the politicized model of police, which gave control of the subnational police to local politicians.[62] No relationship of authority connected the army and police.[63]

During the period of state formation, Colombia developed its national military into a professionalized force. Initially, the Colombian military was "small, loyal, and unprofessional."[64] The loss of the Isthmus of Panama in 1903 was a key motivator for reforms that improved military education and the systemization of military hierarchy. After an appeal from their own generals, political leaders laid the groundwork for military education institutions—the Army Cadet School, the Naval School, and Army War College—to formally train officers and chiefs. The first generation of officers trained in these institutions had taken their first command by the time La Violencia began. By contrast, the police forces had not undergone the same level of professionalization as the military, a condition underlying the different role each security institution played in the civil war.[65]

Alongside these institutional factors, several characteristics of the security forces impacted the trajectory of La Violencia. As discussed in *Chapter 2. Physical Environment*, the geographic distribution of police forces affected their capacity for enforcing law and order. Most policing occurred in rural areas, where police struggled to cover vast distances over rugged landscapes and with limited resources. Secondly, unlike

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[k] Cardona also argues that characteristics of the political system, when combined with the politicized security configuration, led to an enduring, widespread, and local conflict. He highlights the political system's ability to absorb third-party challengers, its ability to make pacts, and the stability those characteristics engendered.[60]

[l] The Colombian legislature established the police force with Law 90 of 1888 and Law 23 of 1890.[61]

in the United States, the Colombian military was oriented toward internal, not external, security, for the simple fact that Colombia has experienced almost no armed international conflict.[m] This resulted in blurred roles between police and the military, contributing to a balance of resources between the two institutions but not to similar levels of professionalization. The poorly trained police had less autonomy in decision making and were more likely to be manipulated by politicians, providing a ready-made supply of armed actors for rebel forces. Lastly, because of the balance in resources, when police were used to perpetrate partisan-driven conflict, the army was unable to quickly tamp down the violence.[66]

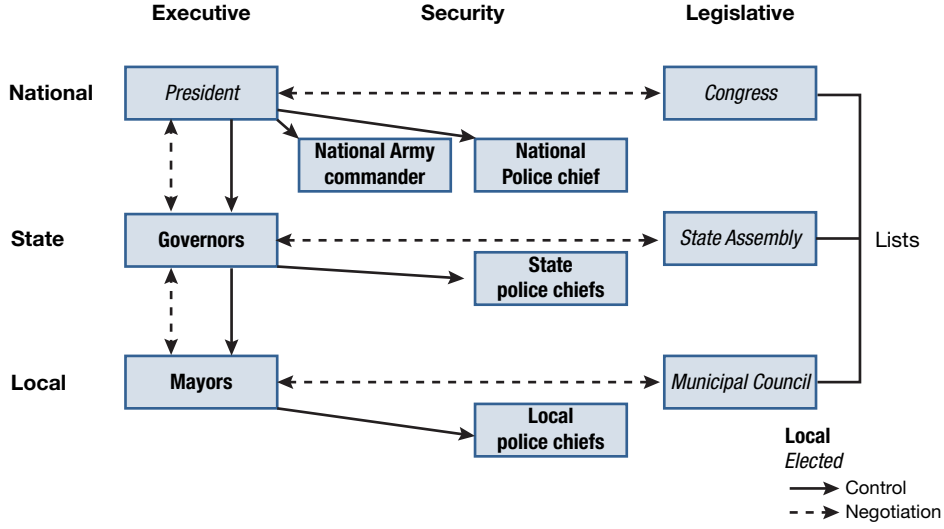

Figure 5-3. Colombia's politicized security force configuration after state formation.

Figure 5-3 illustrates the institutional design underpinning the partisan police force. The president, elected by popular vote, appointed departmental governors. Those governors then had the authority to appoint local mayors. The appointment of police officials followed similar downward streams of control. The president, at his discretion, appointed both the National Army commander and the National Police chief. Similarly, governors appointed local state police chiefs, while mayors had the authority to select their local police chiefs. Elected officials were linked on electoral lists of candidates from which voters selected, connecting the different levels of government through partisan affiliation. Notice, however, that Figure 5-3 illustrates points of negotiation

[m] Since 1878, military personnel in the United States have been prohibited from executing policing functions within the United States by the principle known as *posse comitatus*. The Colombian military has no such strictures.

in this process. Frequently, the selection of governors and mayors was a matter of negotiation between national and state authorities. As discussed previously, the negotiations could, and did, result in simmering hostility between the concerned parties, sowing the seeds for future conflict. The institutional design allowed opportunities for the party in power to use its appointment leverage to ensure a police force affiliated with its party and agenda.

The Colombian police force owed its loyalty to particular individuals or offices, not to the constitutional system itself or to the broader (military) structure of security forces. When the institutional factors are combined with an entrenched two-party system and deep partisan affiliation, the result is a highly politicized police force that often acts in the interests of the party in power, not in the interest of maintaining of law and order. In effect, the police became an armed force available to either rebel or government actors to initiate (in the case of rebels) or to repress (in the case of the government) armed insurrection.[n]

When the violence during La Violencia was at its height from 1949 to 1954, the central government undertook a series of reforms to combat the politicization of the security forces. During this period, the army was increasingly drawn into police work, negatively impacting the professionalism of the institution. This confusion of the role between the police and army concerned security officials. After initial attempts at nationalizing the subnational police in 1951 failed to stem the violence, military dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who took power in 1953, enacted a drastic reform, militarizing the police forces and placing them under a unified command.

Yet, just when the institutional development of the security forces proceeded apace, the nature of La Violencia changed as well. Previously driven by partisan conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives, the violence increasingly took on economic overtones as bandit groups looted and pillaged across the countryside. The conflict was also overlaid by factional fighting within the Conservative Party as well as strong anti-Communist rhetoric.[67]

Colombia's Military Dictatorship

In 1953, Colombia experienced its first—and only—successful military coup of the twentieth century. After the failure of central and regional political authorities to quash the violence raging in the

[n] Cardona also notes that a balance of power in terms of resources and capabilities between the police force and the national army hindered the military's ability to quash violence initiated or sustained by police forces.

countryside, the military took control of the government from Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez, anointed by an ailing Gómez as acting president in 1951. On May 22, 1953, Lieutenant General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla announced in a speech that the military would back the "acting" president until his successor was chosen. Gómez returned fire by attempting to have Rojas sent abroad or arrested. Neither ploy was successful. With the backing of the military, Rojas assumed the presidency in June.

With the exception of diehard Gómez supporters, most Colombians welcomed the military's intervention. Throughout most of the conflict, the military had remained a more or less neutral party. The military had become associated with past Conservative administrations, but the onus of suppressing the Liberal insurrection in the countryside had rested mostly with police forces. On occasion, the military had even been called on to reel in the excesses of the police forces. Robert H. Dix also observes that the impetus behind the military coup was arguably a rival faction within the Conservative Party itself, followers of former Conservative President Ospina. He writes that, "In a real sense the Colombian military did not intervene in politics on its own initiative; instead, it had politics thrust upon it."[68]

The main thrusts of Rojas's dictatorship were the suppression of violence and alleviating social grievances. Rojas immediately enacted measures to end the strife, including amnesty for guerrillas and aid to speed the reintegration of demobilized fighters into normal society. The measure induced many guerrilla bands to lay down their arms. To combat the partisan culture of the police force, Rojas removed the police from under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, making the institution instead a fourth branch of the military. Rojas also enacted a series of measures to address social grievances, including extensive public works and social welfare projects, increased land taxation, expansion of available credit for small farmers, and protection of small businesses against larger monopolies.

Rojas's propensity for combining these approaches with repressive methods eventually led to his peaceful ouster by a broad coalition of political and civic actors. Press censorship tightened under the regime, with the leading paper in the country, *El Tiempo*, shut down in 1955 for insulting the president.[69] The military and police used increasingly arbitrary, and deadly, measures against perceived threats to the presidency, including measures against student demonstrators, political opponents, and Colombians who were insufficiently vigorous in their welcome of the president at public events. After Rojas Pinilla maneuvered the National Constituent Assembly (which Gómez had installed to replace the Liberal Congress) to rubber stamp him for another term as "elected" president, his fragmented opposition coalesced into

a unified effort to remove him from office. The traditional parties' acceptance of a military regime was predicated on its eventual transition to a civilian administration—in which each party hoped to have a stake. After the military government placed a presidential candidate vetted by both parties under house arrest in May 1957, it became apparent to Liberals and Conservatives that a voluntary transition to civilian politics was unlikely. Party members, the church, students, businessmen, and others took to the streets in peaceful protest. Combined with a defection of military officers, the protests forced Rojas out of power in May 1957.[70]

The National Front

After the peaceful, civilian-led ouster of Rojas' military dictatorship, the Colombian government was reconstructed via a concordance between the Liberal and Conservative parties. The political system that emerged, while dominated by the same elites that had contributed to the collapse of the previous system, included "new rules of the game" to forestall a return to the immoderate partisanship that guided Colombia's descent into a brutal civil war. These new rules simultaneously reconfigured important components of Colombian government while ensuring that power, nearly uncontested, remained in the hands of political elites. Popular participation remained relatively circumscribed. The result was a combined governing coalition, the Frente Nacional (National Front, or FN). The new political system was enshrined in a constitution amending its 1886 predecessor. A national plebiscite on the new constitution resulted in a majority approval in late 1957. Important constitutional provisions included the following:

- Parity, or *paridad*, ensuring that each party had equal representation in legislative, ministerial, and other high-ranking positions.
- Alternation, or *alternación*, of the executive office (president) between the Liberal and Conservative parties. The president served a four-year term.

The impetus behind the constitutional provisions was encouraging a culture of conciliation and compromise between the two political factions.[o] In anticipation of the development of such civil political

[o] The National Front is a good example of a type of democratic government known as consociational democracy. A consociational democracy constitutionally guarantees group representation in order to bring political stability to deeply divided societies like Colombia's. For instance, in the aftermath of Lebanon's civil war,[71] the country adopted measures that allocate government positions according to the size of the religious communities involved in the civil war. For a description of consociational democracy, see Lijphart.[72]

character, the altered constitution abolished the provisions of *paridad* and *alternación* in 1974. At that time, democratic elections, open contestation, and participatory politics were intended to prevail. "By 1974, it was hoped that arbitrary constraints introduced sixteen years earlier could be removed, proceeding without the embittered and venomous irresponsibility which had so contaminated national politics earlier."[73]

The National Front system consciously readopted the hegemonic two-party system of the previous century. It controlled political participation and the impingements on elite rule that such participation might bring. The restraints encouraged much needed stabilization and more effective policy making in the short term. Yet, the restraints also alienated the average Colombian, who recognized the futility of political mobilization to effect change. Not surprisingly, visits to the ballot box dropped.[74] The restrictions on political participation supplied leftist insurgents, like those discussed in *Part III. Government Countermeasures*, with ample material to construct compelling narratives illustrating the illegitimacy of the Colombian government.

As the planned end of the National Front in 1974 approached, discussions and public debate proceeded apace regarding the future of Colombian democracy in light of the coming abolishment of *paridad* and *alternación*. Despite the provision for expiration of these measures in 1974, further constitutional adjustments enacted in 1968 ensured that after the deadline, the constitutionally constrained democracy installed in 1956 was not fully dismantled. *Alternación* was allowed to disappear, and as expected, the presidential elections of 1974 were openly contested. But the 1968 constitutional adjustment required the president to ensure equitable representation to the largest party other than his or her own. The measure further extended bipartisan control of the government, but there is disagreement on the extent to which it did so.[75]

However, the National Front was not fully dismantled until the adoption of the 1991 constitution. The following section describes the current constitutional design under the 1991 constitution.

COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT UNDER THE 1991 CONSTITUTION

Colombia's current political system follows the 1991 constitution, the country's first in more than a century. The 1886 charter was highly centralizing, and despite subsequent reforms over the course of the twentieth century, continued to present an obstacle to the full democratization of Colombian society. A constituent assembly was convened in the 1980s to revive the legitimacy of Colombia's constitutional system

by expanding "citizens' basic rights, increasing the participation of civil society in various decision-making processes, incorporating previously marginalized groups, including black and indigenous communities, and bringing illegal armed factions . . . into the political fold."[76]

The Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), one of the four insurgency groups analyzed in this study, played a vital role in bringing about the redesign of Colombia's political system. The group insisted on a new constitution as a fundamental condition for laying down its arms in the 1990s.[P] M-19 leaders gained twenty-seven percent of the vote in a popular election to send representatives to the Constituent Assembly, the body responsible for rewriting Colombia's constitution. There, they pushed for reforms, especially with regard to expanding opportunities for political participation. Despite these efforts, many of Colombia's structural problems, such as department-level fiscal inequities, continue unabated under the 1991 constitution.

Figure 5-4 depicts the current structure of the Colombian government. Like the governments of many of its regional neighbors, Colombia's government revolves around a robust presidential role. The president is the "chief of state, head of government, supreme administrative authority, and commander in chief of the armed forces." Until recently, the president was elected for a single four-year term. In 2005, the Congress passed legislation authorizing a single re-election for the president, which enabled then-President Alvaro Uribe Vélez to stand (successfully) for a second term. Like in the United States, the vice president is elected on the same ticket as the president and succeeds him or her in case of illness, death, or resignation. The president oversees the executive branch, appointing all members to his or her ministerial cabinet, as well as heads of various administrative agencies. The president is responsible for maintaining internal order as well as the state's national sovereignty. In a departure from US presidential powers, the Colombian executive office is empowered with significant legislative authority. The Congress can, when requested, grant the president the power to legislate laws, even those not related to public order.

[P] M-19's impact on the drafting and adoption of the 1991 constitution is described in the *M-19 Political Operations* section.

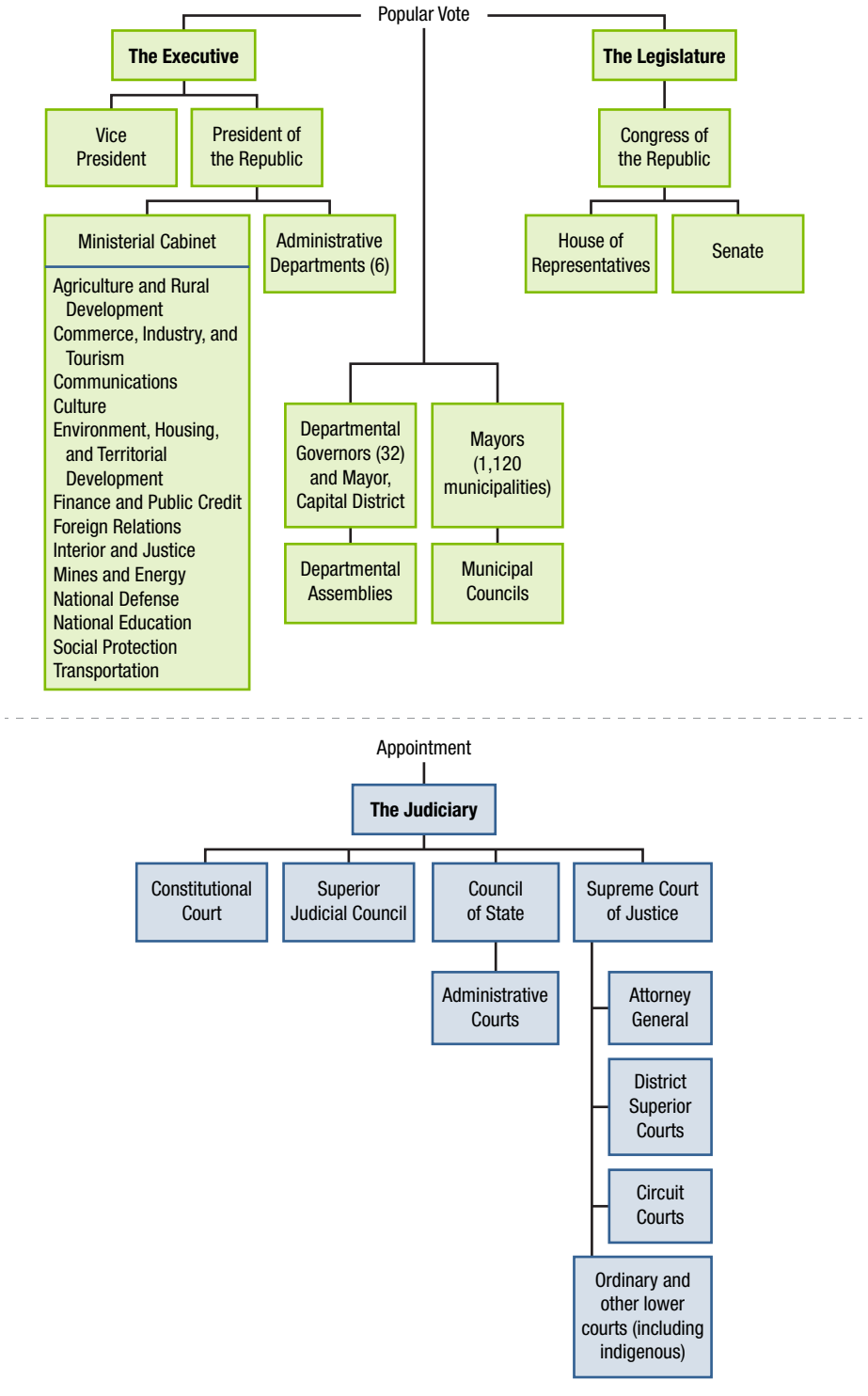

Figure 5-4. The structure of the Colombian government.

Colombia's legislature has two branches: a Senate (102 members) and a House of Representatives (166 in 2009).[q] Colombians elect Congress members for four-year terms. Members of the Senate are elected nationwide, while members of the House are elected within the thirty-two departments. Congress members can be re-elected indefinitely. Rather than electing specific individuals for office in a "winner-takes-all" system, as in the United States, the Colombian legislative elections are based on proportional representation. In a party-list proportional representation election, competing political parties provide lists of candidates that will be installed in office if voters select their party. Many parties in Colombia allow for an "open list," which allows voters to mark candidate preferences. Parties are then allocated legislative seats according to the percentage of votes they received in the election. In the example below, a senate ballot from the 2010 elections, Colombian voters can either vote in Part A (national district) or Part B (indigenous set-aside seats). If voting for Part A, voters select the party logo at the top. If the party has an open list, then voters choose the number corresponding to their preferred candidate. Candidates typically include their number on their campaign ads.

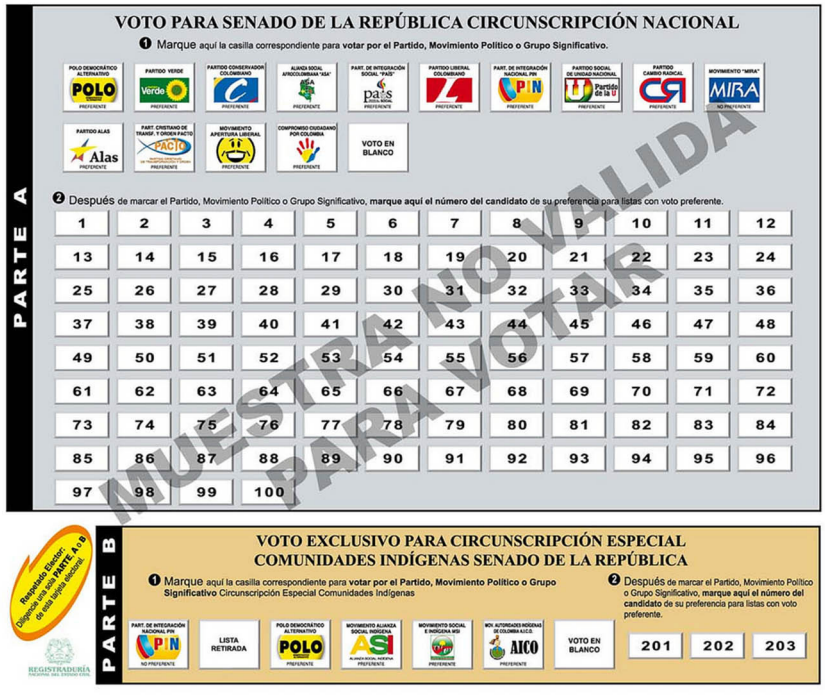
VOTO PARA SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA CIRCUNSCRIPCIÓN NACIONAL
Marque aquí la casilla correspondiente para votar por el Partido, Movimiento Político o Grupo Significativo.
PARTE A
VOTO EN BLANCO
Después de marcar el Partido, Movimiento Político o Grupo Significativo, marque aquí el número del candidato de su preferencia para listas con voto preferente.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36
37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48
49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60
61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72
73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84
85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96
97 98 99 100
MUESTRA NO VALIDA PARA VOTAR
Recuerde Elector: Diligencie una PARTE A o B de esta tarjeta electoral
REGISTRADURÍA
PARTE B
VOTO EXCLUSIVO PARA CIRCUNSCRIPCIÓN ESPECIAL COMUNIDADES INDÍGENAS SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA
Marque aquí la casilla correspondiente para votar por el Partido, Movimiento Político o Grupo Significativo Circunscripción Especial Comunidades Indígenas
Después de marcar el Partido, Movimiento Político o Grupo Significativo, marque aquí el número del candidato de su preferencia para listas con voto preferente.
LISTA RETIRADA
VOTO EN BLANCO
201 202 203

Figure 5-5. Example of Colombian voters' ballot (Senatorial election).

[q] The number of members in the House of Representative is fixed to the national population census and accordingly varies as the population grows.

The national legislative body of Colombia has a number of duties. Many revolve around legislation, including proposing, interpreting, reforming, or repealing legislation. Because of the internal dynamics of the Congress, the president is more successful in passing legislation than Congress, although the latter institution initiates more legislation. Others powers of the Congress include the following:

- Initiating a constitutional reform process[77]
- Approving the national development plan
- Approving or rejecting international treaties
- Determining internal boundaries of general national territory and administrative structures
- Granting extraordinary decree powers to the president
- Establishing the national legal currency

Despite the historic strength of Colombia's two-party system, fragmentation and internal divisions within the parties have precluded disciplined voting behavior in Congress. Party members often have little identification with a party's platform or ideology and anemic visions for national, regional, or local policies. A coherent opposition strategy, given the erratic voting patterns of representatives, is very unlikely. In some cases, sympathetic members of the opposition party are more likely to vote in favor of government initiatives than are dissident factions within the government's own party. The 1991 constitution attempted to restore the public's faith in the Congress and address its deficiencies, but today it plays a muted legislative and fiscal role relative to the powerful executive.[78] This is partly due to the collapse of the formerly stable two-party system in the 2000s, which analysts point to as deriving at least in part from how the new constitution, along with associated decentralizing reforms in the late 1980s, altered the structure and incentives of clientelism within the political system.[79] This collapse has led to a proliferation of parties outside the traditional Liberal and Conservative ones, which makes governance through coalition necessary. This has proved difficult for a political system unaccustomed to such an approach.

The territorial government in Colombian spans thirty-two administrative departments and the Distrito Capitál de Bogotá, the capital district. Departments are further broken down into local municipalities, with 1,120 spanning the thirty-two departments. Governors, elected every four years for nonrenewable terms, administer the departments. Local municipalities are headed by mayors, also elected every four years for nonrenewable terms. Before the 1991 constitution, mayors were installed by presidential or gubernatorial appointments, as described in prior sections. The current constitution also devolves more resources

and responsibilities from the central government to departments and local municipalities to enhance departmental autonomy, decentralize, and increase citizen participation in governance.[80]

A number of different courts and offices comprise the judiciary branch of the Colombian government. The highest court in the land is the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is responsible for a number of functions, listed below:

- Serve as the court of final appeal
- Judge cases involving accusations of wrongdoing by the president and other high-ranking public officials
- Judge cases involving accusations of wrongdoing of other governmental, diplomatic, and military officials
- Investigate and judge members of Congress accused of wrongdoing
- Review international agreements

Justices for the Supreme Court are selected by the Supreme Court itself from a list of candidates provided by the Superior Judicial Council.[r] Supreme Court justices, twenty-three in total, serve nonrenewable eight-year terms. One particularly sensitive political issue the Supreme Court handles is extradition requests. The number of such requests has risen considerably in the past decade, many originating from the United States with regard to drug trafficking. Since 2003, the court has extradited 400 individuals to the United States. The Supreme Court is also responsible for administering a series of subordinate courts, including district superior courts, the highest court at the regional level, and circuit courts and lower courts, which operate at the municipal level.

In addition to the Supreme Court and the lower courts, the judiciary branch includes the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court, limited to nine members, is the primary defender of the Colombian constitution. The Senate elects the judges from a list of candidates provided by a variety of government offices. Each judge serves an eight-year, nonrenewable term. The Court's primary judicial function is ruling on the constitutionality of legal issues such as the following:

- Laws
- Administrative and legislative procedures
- Constitutional reform proposals

[r] The Superior Judicial Council is divided into two chambers, the administrative and the jurisdictional discipline chamber. Judges in the administrative chamber are elected by the Council of State (three judges); the Supreme Court (two judges); and the Constitutional Court (one judge). Judges in the jurisdictional chamber are elected by the Congress from a list of candidates provided by the government.

- Popular referenda
- Legislative decrees issued by the president

The Constitutional Court has ruled on a variety of political, economic, and social issues since its founding in 1992. Because its rulings are binding on other entities in the judicial branch and the government in general, its rulings tend to generate a fair amount of controversy. The Court has typically been well regarded by most Colombians, but several questionable appointments to its bench in recent years have tarnished its reputation for neutrality.[81] In 2013, the Court struck down a government-led effort to reform the Constitution to allow military forces to prosecute charges against their members in military courts for all crimes except those classified as crimes against humanity. This ruling reflects the continued negotiation of relationships of power between civilian and military authorities in Colombia.

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[30] Henderson, *When Colombia Bled*, 107.

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CONCLUSION TO PART I

Colombia is currently experiencing a cycle of violence perpetrated by leftist guerrillas, drug traffickers, criminal bands, and right-wing paramilitaries. This cycle of violence has direct roots in yet another episode of political violence in Colombia's history, La Violencia, Colombia's mid-century civil war. In turn, the localized conflicts between Liberal and Conservative partisans in the Colombian countryside that composed the war resulted from the convergence of geographical, historical, socioeconomic, and political factors. In this regard, Colombia is an apt example of the advantages of using these important contextual factors to help explain and elucidate the dynamic processes that lead to sustained political violence in other states around the world. In particular, the roots of political violence in the country have been especially impacted by institutions that have governed political, social, and economic processes in Colombia. Examining the institutional context of political violence in Colombia also draws attention to the complementary influences of structure and agency in the study of political violence.

Since nearly its inception, the central government in Colombia has struggled to maintain its legitimacy in regions outside of Bogotá and other major urban centers. The discussions in the preceding section draw attention to the influence of different contextual factors affecting the legitimacy of governing institutions in Colombia. From the outset, the rugged, mountainous terrain and dense jungles in the country helped to entrench strong regionalism that led to struggles over the extent of autonomy exercised by regional and local governments. While the national government sought greater centralized control over regional governments, the latter sought greater autonomy from Bogotá.

More directly, the geography of Colombia proved a significant barrier to developing infrastructure connecting the capital with outlying regions. In large part, a state's legitimacy is derived from its sovereignty. The Colombian government has de jure sovereignty over its territory, or sovereignty granted by legal recognition of its borders by the international community. However, in outlying regions Colombia lacks what is known as de facto sovereignty, or actual control over territory it purports to rule. That is, in many areas the state fails to act like a state. Local residents may lack physical security, roads, communications, and basic education and healthcare. The failure of the state to fulfill the obligations expected of it leeches legitimacy from the state in the eyes of its citizens.

The weak state in Colombia has had a direct and indirect influence on political violence in the country. The lack of public services as we

as poverty and inequality in the country has led to grievances among underserved populations that have been aptly exploited by armed actors in Colombia. These remote areas of Colombia also provided sanctuaries for armed actors challenging the authority of the state. However, as discussed later in the FARC, ELN, and M-19 chapters, leftist guerrillas had to balance safety in these areas with attacks on strategic targets often closer to national security assets and populous areas. The FARC and the ELN in particular used attacks on strategic infrastructure to economically and symbolically damage the power of the state. With the assistance of the United States, Colombian security forces were able to use technology to degrade the advantages insurgents sought in remote areas.

Colombia's weak state has also meant that it has failed to maintain a monopoly on violence in areas of poor governance. For many Colombians, this has resulted in a profound lack of personal security. During La Violencia, peasants in the countryside received little protection against partisan violence. As a result, Colombians banded together in self-defense groups to defend their communities. The long-standing tradition of self-defense groups as a substitute for state security has exacerbated the state's control of violence. Liberal self-defense groups formed during La Violencia later became the seeds for the leftist insurgent groups still active in Colombia. Likewise, right-wing paramilitaries also evolved from self-defense groups formed to combat leftist guerillas. The multitude of armed actors has complicated the resolution of political violence in the country. In the Government and Countermeasures section, we discuss how Colombia's counterinsurgent efforts in the twenty-first century have evolved to focus on the consolidation of national power in areas cleared of insurgents.

When thinking about the factors underlying political violence, we often look for explanation in the actions and decisions of individuals. This might mean looking at the actions and decisions of elite political leaders, insurgent leaders, or even those of rank-and-file soldiers in an insurgency. This method is often referred to as "agency" because it considers the capacity of individuals to make free choices. As one example of a focus on the role of agency in political violence, in The Rebel's Dilemma Mark Lichbach looks at how individuals make the decision to engage in collective dissent despite the many disadvantages of doing so. He finds a host of "market solutions" that increase the benefits of participation, decrease the cost of participating, and improve the chances of winning alters the individual decision-making processes that would otherwise lead to nonparticipation.[1]

While examining the motivations of these key stakeholders is an important component of understanding conflict dynamics, the

decisions individuals make is tempered by the institutions that shape political and social processes. Many social scientists study institutions to understand how they affect outcomes. Because it looks at how institutional rules shape individual or group behavior, this type of analysis is often referred to as "structure." Institutions can be both informal (traditions, codes of conduct) and formal constraints (constitutions, laws) that structure political, social, or economic actions.[2] A good example of a structural approach to political violence is found in Jeremy Weinstein's book, Inside Rebellion. Weinstein argues that the organizational structure (the institution or structure) of insurgent groups affects the extent to which those groups abuse civilian populations, not the pursuit of any specific goals the group or individuals might have.[3]

Institutions establish "rules of the game" that make human interaction more orderly and predictable. The rules established in each institution constrain, limit, or incentivize individual and group behavior by setting parameters for the range of available choices or opportunities for those who operate within its the confines.[4] For instance, the US Constitution sets the parameters for the separation of powers between the three branches of the government. Unless significant changes are made to the Constitution, individuals and groups active in politics in the United States are necessarily bound by these constraints.

There are a number of different methods that social scientists use to understand how institutions affect social, political, and economic behavior. One that is particularly useful for examining political conflict is called historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism looks at how changes in institutions emerged from historical processes and affected the political, social, and economic outcomes in different states.[a]

In the preceding section, we discussed the development of a number of institutions that impacted political conflict in Colombia. Until the 1886 constitution was altered in 1991, all politics in Colombia took place under the constitution. It granted highly centralized authority to the executive office and thus ceded tremendous power to the party that controlled the office. Likewise, the more informal institution of clientelism in Colombia shaped the distribution of public goods in the country. Clientelism evolved from its more primitive variety to its more institutionalized form in the bureaucratic state over the course of centuries in Colombia. In the decades preceding La Violencia, the political party with control of the presidency limited the distribution of the significant largesse of the state to its members and parties. The institutions described above helped to create a winner-takes-all system that left the

[a] For a description of historical institutionalism and how it differs from other closely related methods, such as rational and sociological institutionalism, please see Thelen.[5]

losing party in a significantly weakened position. The institutional configuration of the security forces impacted how well the state protected its citizens from harm resulting from these partisan struggles. Because the police forces were tied to the president, individual politicians had considerable control to direct the state's security forces. The politicization and poor professionalization of the police force made it especially susceptible to manipulation by politicians in the ruling party. When married with the deep partisan affiliations in the country, this institutional configuration helped the ruling party repress and abuse those in the opposition who often had no means of redress.

This emphasis on institutions does not detract from the role that individuals played in this period so important to the violence that emerged in the decades after the civil war. The behavior of political elites, for instance, impacted the divisions of the Liberal and Conservative parties that led to the grand electoral transitions in 1930 and 1946. Popular and influential leaders like Gómez and Gaitan affected political developments leading up to La Violencia. Of course, the individual decisions of those who participated in perpetrating violence in the countryside also clearly shaped the outcome of the civil war.

Political conflicts are complex events that take place in a constellation of social, political, economic, and geographic factors. In this section, we have examined how the convergence of these factors contributed to the outbreak of the civil war that preceded the leftist, drug-trafficking, and paramilitary violence still prevalent in Colombia today. A study of the contextual factors surrounding the conflict in Colombia draws attention to the complementary analysis of structure and agency in conflict dynamics. In the following sections, we analyze the insurgent groups and paramilitaries themselves.

ENDNOTES

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3 Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

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PART II.

STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF THE INSURGENCY

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict has dogged Colombia for more than seven decades. While many insurgent groups and paramilitaries have operated in the country during that time, the four discussed below, the FARC, ELN, M-19, and AUC, have arguably had the greatest impact on Colombia. The conflict has rarely been dyadic, that is, between two opposed armed groups. Instead, leftist guerrillas battle the state, while paramilitaries confront guerrilla forces and sometimes also the state. Despite having similar ideologies and goals, leftist guerrilla groups proved unable to unite under a single banner, with each group jealously guarding its own ideological interpretations and security. Occasionally, the guerrillas fought one another. Despite Colombia being home to some of the longest enduring insurgencies in the Western Hemisphere, only M-19 has had any lasting impact on Colombian politics. In the early 1990s, the group was instrumental in rewriting the constitution that widened democratic participation in the country. The extended conflict has inflicted a terrible toll on the civilian population in Colombia. Tens of thousands have died or been injured in the violence, driving millions from their rural homes to face grinding poverty in urban slums.

The armed groups discussed in the following sections have used different ideological tenets to justify their actions and appeal to target populations. Three of the groups, the FARC, the ELN, and M-19, derived their core narratives from various leftist sources. All emphasized the need for social justice, opposition to Western imperialism, and the corrupt, elitist nature of the Colombian government. They claimed to speak on behalf of the marginalized poor. The FARC and the ELN were especially inspired by the ideals of the Cuban Revolution. The ELN's ideological legacy draws heavily on Catholic liberation theology first articulated by Fabio Vasquez. Camilo Torres, the priest turned guerrilla who joined the group early in its history, carried on Vasquez's work and became a focal point around which the group coalesced. At times, the FARC has lacked the ideological coherence of its counterparts. As the group became increasingly involved in the drug trade, greed, not grievance, appeared to become the insurgents' primary motive. In contrast to the stricter interpretation of leftist doctrine of the FARC and the ELN, M-19 adopted a leftist ideology that incorporated strong nationalist overtones. Early M-19 leadership cultivated a flexible and accessible ideology to appeal to the broadest swath of society possible.

At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum is the AUC, the progovernment paramilitary group that sought to eradicate the leftist

guerrillas.[a] The AUC developed an ideology that stressed the importance of private property, free enterprise, tradition, and law and order. These tenets translated into "social cleansings" of undesirables, such as beggars, drug users, and prostitutes.

The four armed groups also articulated contrasting political visions of their "ideal" Colombian state. As is the case with many insurgent groups, all four are more prepared to fight than to rule. The FARC and the ELN often looked to the Cuban state as a guide. Both the groups consistently highlighted the illegitimacy of the Colombian government and advocated for a fundamental restructuring of its institutions. However, in articulating their political visions, the groups usually defaulted to ambiguous statements about enfranchising marginalized classes, such as workers and peasants, while decreasing the influence of nefarious Western imperialists, especially the United States. By contrast, early on its career, M-19 supported Colombian democracy, while arguing that it needed to include all segments of society, not just the elites. The AUC, as a progovernment paramilitary, supported the status quo, although the group sought to ensure that its backers maintained positions of power in the government.

Two insurgent groups, the FARC and M-19, entered the legal political process. In the 1980s, the FARC concluded a truce with the government that, for a brief time, incorporated the group's public component, the Unión Patriótica (UP), or the Patriotic Union, into the legal political process. The UP's political platform, which included anticorruption and land reform measures, provides insight into the group's political savvy. Unfortunately for the UP, the paramilitaries assassinated hundreds of its members, precluding a successful political solution for FARC. The UP debacle, and the death of Raúl Reyes, decimated the FARC's core cadre of political thinkers. After its demobilization, M-19 also entered the legal political process. More successful than their FARC counterparts, M-19 members nonetheless proved incapable of sustaining a long-term political movement. Subsequently, M-19's public component faded to irrelevance in the 1990s, although some individual former guerrillas have enjoyed fruitful political careers.

A careful study of the insurgents' paramilitary operations illustrates the myriad ends to which violence can be deployed. In this regard, the FARC is the most "traditional" in its use of violence to directly confront and defeat state security forces. M-19, on the other hand, is the least traditional, using carefully orchestrated violence as a primary

[a] In the context of the Colombian conflict, the term *paramilitary* is commonly used to describe the armed, pro-state groups that continue to battle leftist insurgents. However, this study also uses the term *paramilitary* in a more traditional sense to describe the irregular, kinetic operations of the armed groups participating in the conflict.

method of communication with the state and the general populace. For the group, such violence replaced speech in the public realm. ELN operations, although not as masterfully executed, sometimes followed similar patterns. The ELN and the FARC also used their paramilitary operations as means of delegitimizing the government; many of their attacks focused on critical infrastructure in the state such as utilities and roads. By contrast, the AUC deployed violence in a scorched earth policy to preclude the necessary civilian support for the leftist guerrillas. The group's signature tactic, civilian massacres, was more effective than engaging the elusive guerrillas themselves. Finally, in lieu of military defeat of the Colombian state, the insurgents used violence as a lever to press for more favorable negotiating terms.

The Impact of Internal Armed Conflict in Colombia

The extended internal armed conflict in Colombia has taken a significant toll on the civilian population. In the period from 1988 to 2003, 11,119 Colombian civilians were killed and 5,499 more injured as a result of political violence.[b] When civilians are killed by armed groups, they are typically not innocent bystanders caught in clashes between armed groups but instead are part of violence intentionally directed toward civilian populations by a single armed group. About eighty-five percent of civilian casualties result from these direct attacks.[2] Massacre attacks[c] are the most devastating type of attack to civilians, accounting for forty percent of civilian deaths. Bombings, incursions, and road blockages account for the remainder of deaths.[4] Bombing attacks resulted in the most civilian injuries in Colombia. While the leftist guerillas, especially the FARC, are responsible for most injuries to civilians, the paramilitaries are responsible for most civilian deaths.[5]

The ELN and the FARC have killed (2,280) and injured (2,981) many civilians, 5,261 in total, but most of the groups' attacks have targeted government authorities or were aimed at economic sabotage. The FARC has committed hundreds of economic and infrastructure attacks, for instance, but civilian deaths or injuries during those attacks are few. Bombing attacks account for most civilian deaths and injuries, most of which occurred in the least densely populated municipalities and Colombia's biggest cities. Only about two percent of guerrilla targets were massacres that specifically target civilian government or

[b] Despite these high numbers, combatant casualties in Colombia outnumber civilian casualties by two to one.[1]

[c] Massacre attacks are defined as the "killing of more than three defenceless people with some selectiveness against either the people killed or the place where they are killed."[3]

paramilitary supporters.[6] With the exception of those in one year, 1998, the FARC attacks have been more deadly to civilians than those of the ELN.[7] Guerrilla bombings, which account for the majority of civilian injuries, occurred both in sparsely populated areas (sixty percent) and Colombia's big cities (thirty-one percent).[8]

Paramilitary attacks killed more civilians, 6,543 in the period under investigation, than leftist guerrilla attacks, largely because right-wing groups perpetrate more civilian massacres. Altogether, the paramilitaries have killed twice as many civilians in attacks as the guerrillas, three-fourths of which were killed in massacres. By contrast, the paramilitaries injured only 478 civilians. The most frequent method of attack, the massacre, is marked by close-range tactics that leave few civilians injured and alive. While surprising, the finding is consistent with the groups' primary strategy—targeting civilians supporting the leftist guerrillas. The leader of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, describes the group's strategy:

> Since we could not combat [the guerrillas] where they were, we chose to neutralize the people who brought to their camps food, medicine, messages, liquor, prostitutes, and these types of things. And we realized that we could isolate them and that this strategy would give us very good results. Incredible.[9]

In line with this strategy, the paramilitaries killed more civilians per attack than the guerrillas (4.77 compared to 0.25 deaths per attack).[10] Most paramilitary massacres, seventy percent, occurred in very lightly populated areas with three or fewer persons per square kilometer.[11,d]

Millions of Colombians have become refugees in their own country since La Violencia, the mid-century civil war, and the outbreak of leftist guerrilla insurgencies that followed in the 1960s. Since 1985, when the Colombian agency Consultaría par los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES) first began tracking internally displaced persons (IDPs), CODHES has counted 5.2 million displaced persons.[13,e] As of 2011, 3.8 million Colombians, out of a population of 45 million, are officially registered as IDPs with the Colombian government.[14] However, this number likely does not capture the full number of IDPs because of legal restrictions on eligibility, a lack of information, and other barriers to registration.[15] An additional 500,000 Colombians are refugees outside of the country.[16] Along with Iraq and Sudan, Colombia has the highest number of IDPs in the world.[17] Many IDPs migrate

[d] The population density threshold is even lower for guerrilla massacres, at two persons per square kilometer.[12]

[e] Other estimates of IDPs in Colombia are not as high.

to the country's largest cities, Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and others. Around seventy-four percent of IDPs do not belong to a minority group. However, minority groups are disproportionately affected by violence in Colombia. While they account for only five percent of the total population, minority groups account for twenty-six percent of the IDP population.[18]

There are two primary patterns of displacement in Colombia. The first, known as *gota-a-gota*, or drop-by-drop, occurs when a single family or individual flees their home after receiving threats from an armed group or from fear of imminent violence. This is the most common pattern in Colombia today, accounting for ninety-three percent of all displacements.[19] The less common pattern, mass displacement, occurs after a massacre or bombing, or knowledge of such an impending event. In these cases, entire villages and communities uproot to move to areas of safety. This pattern is most apparent in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, which tend to interpret threats of violence collectively. Most IDPs, around ninety-two percent in 1998–2008, originate in rural areas, migrating to urban areas where they reside in informal slums. In this same period, the rural areas of the north and west of the country produced the largest number of IDPs. After fleeing from violence, IDPs encounter many challenges. Most face extreme poverty. Nearly ninety-nine percent of IDPs live below the poverty line, with eighty-three percent of those living in extreme poverty. As a result, most are lacking basic necessities such as decent housing, employment, and health care.[20]

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER 6.

FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS DE COLOMBIA (FARC)

TIMELINE

August 1962	President Guillermo León Valencia Muñoz is inaugurated.
May 1964	President Valencia orders Operation Marquetalia—a government effort to dissolve self-defense forces. Manuel Marulanda, also known as "Sureshot," is able to hold out with a band of forty-eight men, marking the birth of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or the FARC.
1966	Communist Colombian Party holds its Tenth Political Congress. During the conference, the group declares mass popular action rather than guerrilla warfare as the primary means to achieve its goals. This is reaffirmed in 1971 at the Eleventh Political Congress.
May 1966	The FARC holds its Second Guerrilla Conference. This is referred to as the "Constitutive Conference."
May 1968	The FARC holds its Third Guerrilla Conference. The National School of Ideological Education is established.
1970	National People's alliance is formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.
1970	The FARC holds its Fourth Guerrilla Conference.
1971	Communist Colombian Party holds its Eleventh Political Congress. The party reaffirms mass popular action rather than guerrilla warfare as the primary means to achieve its goals.
January 1973	The FARC holds a plenary meeting during which the Estado Mayor Central (EMC) is created.
1974	The FARC holds its Fifth Guerrilla Conference in Meta.
January 1978	The FARC holds its Sixth Guerrilla Conference. National command structure is fully articulated to include the general staff of fronts and the secretariat of the EMC.
1978	President Turbay begins intense fight against drug traffickers.
May 1982	The FARC holds its Seventh Guerrilla Conference. The group's "Strategic Plan for Taking Power" emerges, along with the additional moniker Ejército del Pueblo or "People's Army," which changes the insurgency's official acronym to FARC-EP.
August 1982	President Belisario Betancur Cuartas is inaugurated. During his inaugural speech, he announces that the Colombian government will engage in peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas.

November 1982	President Betancur signs Congressional Law 35, granting general amnesty to all guerrilla combatants.
January–March 1984	Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP conduct peace talks. Talks end with el Acuerdo de Uribe (the Aribe Agreement).
May 1984	Cease-fire begins under the Aribe Agreement.
March 1985	Founding of the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica, or UP), The FARC's public component.
March 1986	UP wins several seats in nationwide elections, to include fourteen members of congress. UP presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal receives 4.5 percent of the vote.
August 1986	President Virgilio Barco Vargas is inaugurated.
1987	UP leader Jaime Pardo is assassinated.
December 1987	The FARC holds a guerrilla plenum and decides to renew its efforts toward the "new method of operating" adopted during the Seventh Guerrilla Conference.
May 1989	The FARC holds a guerrilla plenum and develops a military plan known as the Bolivarian Campaign for a New Colombia (la Campaña Bolivariana por una Nueva Colombia), which represents a four-phase strategy to be implemented in January 1990.
1990	UP presidential candidate Bernardo Ossa is killed; The FARC withdraws from legal politics and focuses on strengthening its military capabilities.
1990	Jacobo Arenas, political and ideological leader of the FARC, dies; Manuel Marulanda becomes the FARC's top commander.
1993	The FARC holds its Eighth Guerrilla Conference. The FARC creates an elite cadre known as "los cien sabios," or "the hundred wise men," to be sent abroad to study in universities. It also decides that it is ready to implement the "new method of operating" first defined during the Seventh Guerrilla Conference.
1993	Pablo Escobar is killed.
August 1994	President Ernesto Samper Pizano is inaugurated.
August 1996	The FARC launches an attack on the Las Delicias military base in Putumayo, killing fifty-four soldiers and capturing sixty.

April 1996	1. The FARC devises another Bolivarian plan called "The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia." Included with the plan is the creation of the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party (PCCC).
	2. The FARC conducts a sophisticated attack involving 400 guerrillas at Colombian Army facility at Las Delicias in the Department of Putumayo.
1997	The FARC requests a demilitarized zone of 13,000 square kilometers to allow for safe passage while releasing Colombian soldiers.
August 1998	President Andres Pastrana Arango is inaugurated.
November 1998	Peace talks with the FARC begin. The *zona de despeje*, a safe haven the size of Switzerland, is established.
2000	US Congress appropriates $1.3 billion for Plan Colombia. Total appropriation through 2005 would reach $4.5 billion.
February 20, 2002	The *despeje* is disestablished after the FARC hijacks a commercial airliner, forcing it to land in rebel-held territory, and takes Colombian Senator Turbay hostage.
February 2002	Presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and her vice-presidential running mate are kidnapped by the FARC.
August 2002	The FARC attacks the presidential palace one day before inauguration of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. Twenty people are killed, and sixty are wounded.
August 2002	President Uribe is inaugurated.
April 2003	The Uribe administration is able to modify the Colombian constitution to allow government forces to make arrests without warrants.
2004	Plan Patriota is introduced by Uribe, with the aim of establishing a permanent military presence in rebel-held territory.
March 2008	The Colombian military kills Raúl Reyes in his stronghold in Ecuador during a Colombian cross-border attack.
March 2008	Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda dies of a heart attack. His death is not announced until May 2008.
July 2008	The Colombian military rescues the FARC's highest-profile hostage, Ingrid Betancourt, who had been held in captivity for six years.

ORIGINS OF THE FARC

The political compromise between the two major parties, Conservatives and Liberals, after La Violencia left several groups, especially those on the far left, disenfranchised. The perspective and views of the Partido Comunista Colombiano (PCC), or Colombian Communist Party, placed it on the Liberal side of the country's political spectrum. The Communist and Socialist parties, which had gained favor with the poor landless and working class since the 1940s, continued their anti-establishment agenda.[1] During this period, Communist guerrillas were able to develop the tactics and techniques that would heavily influence FARC ideology.[2] Their adherents, or at least the party's potential constituents, were under constant threat from Conservatives. In 1949, the PCC developed the concept of "mass self-defense." Peasants organized within a secure enclave to provide a modicum of protection.[3] The PCC was not yet a dominant force, so it colluded with members of the Liberal Party to put this concept in place. Manuel Marulanda once reported, "The first meeting between Liberal and Communist guerrillas took place in the area of Irco, Chaparral, at the end of the 1950's."[4] In fact, the ongoing violence displaced Colombians of all walks of life, so some organizations were quite eclectic, including Communists, Liberals, and Conservatives.[5] The concept of mass self-defense became so ingrained that autonomous sanctuaries formed and became known as "Independent Republics." The first were Chicalá, Horizonte, La Marina, and Irco.[6] El Pato, Río Chiquito, Sumapaz, and Marquetalia became among the most recognized.[7]

The government took a myriad of actions to dissolve the Independent Republics, especially during the National Front, post-Rojas Pinilla period. On May 27, 1964, President Guillermo León Valencia Muñoz ordered Operation Marquetalia to root out the last of the Liberal self-defense forces in the region of southern Tolima and northern Huila. A group of forty-eight men, led by Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda, was able to hold out and survive this onslaught. This band, in turn, was supported by a member of the PCC leadership named Luis Morantes who used the alias "Jacobo Arenas." Marulanda and Arenas first met on April 17, 1964, after the PCC sent Arenas into the jungle to find Marulanda and give him any assistance he needed. Together, the two agreed that they could survive and achieve their goals for Colombia. Marulanda said to Arenas on that day, "with your company, the war must not be so hard."[8] In September 1964, Liberal guerrilla Marulanda and Communist ideologue Jacobo Arenas formally formed their group of self-defense fighters into a true revolutionary movement under the

name Bloque Sur de Guerrilla, or Southern Bloc.[a] A year and a half later, they changed the name to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. It has been known as the FARC ever since. Today, the FARC recognizes May 27, 1964, the day that President Valencia ordered Operation Marquetalia, as its official birthday.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, COMMAND AND CONTROL, AND LEADERSHIP

Organizational Structure and Command and Control

The FARC uses a military-like hierarchy for its guerrillas. The pinnacle of command is composed of a seven-man Secretariat that in turn leads a twenty-five–man Central General Staff or Estado Mayor Central (EMC). The subordinate units, from largest to smallest, are the bloc, front, column, company, platoon, and squad.

During the Fifth Guerrilla Conference held in 1974, the FARC divided the nation into seven blocs, assigning each a large state-like territory. The blocs are subdivided further into fronts that encompass smaller geographic areas. Within each front there are guerrillas who perform combat, support, and infrastructure functions. The basic combat unit is a squad of seven to eight fighters. Combining three or four squads forms a platoon of around twenty-five guerrillas. Two platoons comprise a company of fifty to fifty-five fighters, and two or more companies organized together form a column. The support elements are referred to as "commissions," so a front may have logistic, intelligence, or finance commissions.[9] There are seven blocs are dispersed throughout Colombia as follows:

1. The eastern bloc, with twenty-one fronts, covers the region east of the eastern *cordillera* of the Andes and the central departments of Cundinamarca and Boyacá. Its strategic task is to cut off the populous central highlands from the eastern plains and the Amazonian region.
2. The northwestern bloc, with eight fronts, operates in the departments of Antioquia, Chocó, and Córdoba. This bloc controls a corridor from the Panamanian border and the adjacent Atlantic and Pacific coasts to the middle Magdalena valley.
3. The middle Magdalena bloc is active in the area of the same name. Its units operate in parts of the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, César, Santander, and Boyacá.

[a] "South Bloc Guerrillas." The term *bloc* refers to an organizational unit.

4. The southern bloc covers the FARC's strongholds in southern Colombia, in the departments of Caquetá, Huila, Putumayo, and part of Cauca. This area also includes most of the "demilitarized zone" conceded to the FARC by the Colombian government.
5. The western (or southwestern) bloc operates in the departments of Nariño, Cauca, and Valle, the region from the western *cordillera* of the Andes to the Pacific Ocean and down to the Ecuadorean border.[10]

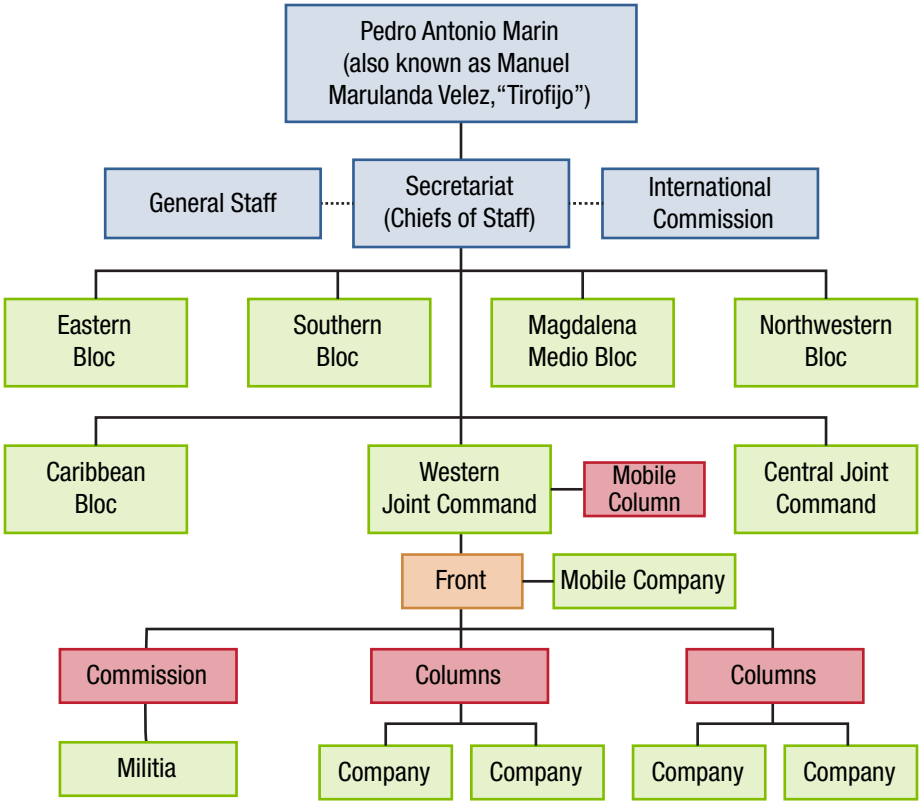

Figure 6-1. FARC organization structure, 1993 time frame.[11]

To maximize flexibility, there are fifteen companies that are independent of the FARC's traditional structure. They are assigned to bloc commanders who use them as reserves.[12] There are also columns assigned directly to the FARC Secretariat.[13] A group of twelve fronts formed in Colombia's Eastern Mountain range connecting la Uribe, Meta, with Venezuela; a second set would surround Bogotá. The FARC also developed *el nuevo método de operar*, or "new method of operating," at the tactical level.[14] It focused mobility, firepower, and coordination against Colombian military units that were in the vanguard of the

counterinsurgency fight. This tactical design was coupled with an ideological strategy, which meant that each level of the guerrilla army's military-style chain of command was "assigned specific political-military objectives to be accomplished within each unit's geographic region of the country."[15] Furthermore, the FARC's political savvy had matured to the point where it realized that all kinetic action must be connected to a political goal to ensure their claims to political legitimacy and the continued support of their constituency.

In order to ensure this unity of purpose as it grew, the FARC wanted to formally introduce the tactical-level commanders to the "new method of operating."[16] It also needed to ensure that new members were properly indoctrinated politically, ideologically, and militarily. As a result, in 1982, the FARC established a guerrilla training center called la Escuela de Cadetes (the Hernando González School of Cadets).[17] Military topics included "mobile guerrilla warfare, military psychology, urban guerrilla warfare, communications, first aid, cartography, artillery, and related topics."[18] New recruits trained locally through a four-month course that included both military and ideological disciplines and the FARC's organization and code of justice.[19] This ensured the "little guerrilla army" of 28,000 was effective. However, internal divisions between the FARC's front leaders in different parts of the country existed, especially between the fronts in colonization areas and those areas that were previously populated.[20]

The FARC began as a mostly defensive organization as it lacked the capacity to start military initiatives.[21] However, over time, it developed its offensive strategy through periodic conferences, with the First Guerrilla Conference in late 1965 in Río Chiquito. Several disparate groups joined together forming what was called the "Southern Bloc" (the aforementioned Bloque Sur de Guerrilla) and what would eventually become the FARC. According to Marulanda, "[the conference] unified our tactics in all detachments and received a series of initiatives toward the creation of the current Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)."[22] Therefore, the armed movement was eventually able to provide protection to peasant supporters and members, to control new territory, and to offer basic services in its blocs.[23]

The PCC concurred with this strategy during its Tenth Congress in January 1966, which Jacobo Arenas attended on behalf of the FARC. Here it was proclaimed, "the guerrilla war is one of the highest forms of mass struggle."[24] However, the FARC and the PCC soon split as the PCC became less willing to use violence. At its Eleventh Congress in 1971, the PCC proclaimed that it "did not consider that guerrilla warfare had established itself as the principle form of struggle in this period since

it expressly declared that the vast majority of the population continued using mass action as the main form of struggle."[25]

Realizing it was drifting from the PCC, the FARC understood it needed to establish and solidify its own organization and its own political theories. To do this, in May 1966, it made it clear during its Second Guerrilla Conference that it still possessed a Marxist–Leninist political platform. Jacobo Arenas stated:

> for the first time that the Guerrilla Movement FARC was building up a struggle prolonged for the capture of the power in union with the Working class and the whole working people. There [*sic*] emphasized the vital importance of the political organization as the conscious and governing factor of the Colombian revolutionary process and that in this sense the FARC would do everything in fulfillment of that big mission.[26]

To continue this effort, a Marxist–Leninist solution that included armed struggle, the FARC established two things during its Third Guerrilla Conference in 1968. First, it founded the Escuela Nacional de Formación Ideológica (National School for Ideological Education) to train its leadership and improve continuity and define the national command structure. Second, it organized into units called "self-defense groups." These elements served as the FARC's underground, controlling all manners of activity within a specified geographic area to include supporting FARC guerrillas operating nearby.[27, b] The self-defense groups did not last beyond the 1970s, however. Each group had too much control, which allowed them to develop autonomously, threatening to fracture the whole. By the late 1970s, the FARC barely had nine fronts and suffered from internal divisions. Furthermore, effective Colombian government crackdown on insurgent movements weakened the political momentum behind the insurgent movements. As a result, the FARC disbanded the groups and centralized control. This phenomenon occurred again later in the 1990s as the FARC became involved in the narcotics trade. Initially, it allowed regional leadership to handle its own operations. Some of the groups mimicked the drug cartel culture and used funds for personal luxuries, which led to a disciplinary action by the FARC leadership.

It is important to emphasize that the blocs as described emerged over time—most of them after the FARC developed a strategic plan to grow its organization that was supported by the narcotics trade. First, however, it had to survive through the 1970s, the period that Colonel

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[b] *Underground* is a specific term to denote the unarmed popular support for an insurgency.

Manuel Pérez described as the "indifference" phase, a time when the FARC had little impact because of its size and location. Before the 1980s, there were really never more than about one thousand guerrillas at any one time. Furthermore, they were predominantly located in the jungle-covered eastern two-thirds of Colombia, whereas most of the population lived in the west and northwestern urban, coastal regions. By 2002, the FARC had presence in twenty-three *departamentos*[28,c] and four hundred municipalities.[29]

Leadership

Manuel Marulanda ("Tirofijo") Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda was born into a Liberal family as Pedro Antonio Marín in May of either 1930 or 1932 in the municipality of Genova, Qunidio, Colombia. The young Marín completed a fifth-grade education but also learned the more patrician skills of shooting and fencing. At the age of thirteen, Marín left home to fend for himself, working as a baker, candy seller, builder, and merchant. When La Violencia began, Marín became a Liberal guerrilla. He suggests that to do so was in his blood.

"Taking up arms was the only way to survive," he once said, "All of us were Liberal . . . my father, my mother, my uncles, and an endless chain which no one escapes, it was Liberal. It was like a lump of pure tradition . . . The family of us was Gaitán."[30]

The Marín family was targeted, causing Pedro Antonio to flee and hide on an uncle's farm. He was then tasked to form a guerrilla band of family and friends to fight the Conservatives. The self-defense force he formed became interested in Marxist–Leninist ideology when the PCC gave it military training. By the time the Pinilla administration offered amnesty, Marín was no longer simply a Liberal protector, he was a revolutionary.[31]

In 1953, Marín was first given the nickname "Sureshot" in recognition of his prowess with firearms. Two years later, he adopted the nom de guerre "Manuel Marulanda Vélez" after a Communist leader who was assassinated in Bogotá in January 1951.[32]

Marulanda led the FARC and its seven-man governing body—the Secretariat—through its growth and increased prominence in Colombia, and through peace talks and narcoterrorism, until his death from a heart attack in March 2008.

[c] Colombian *departamentos*, or departments, are comparable to states.

Luis Alberto Morantes Jaimes ("Jacobo Arenas")

Jacobo Arenas's birth name was Luis Morantes. He became a leader in the Communist movement while a student. Immediately following the Bogotazo, he began working on the rights of oil workers in Colombia.[33] Arenas participated in the resistance against Rojas Pinilla and even rose to be a member of the PCC Central Committee. In 1964, Arenas met with Marulanda and other members of the self-defense forces just as they were forming their insurgency. Recognizing they needed his political savvy, Arenas decided to become the ideological brains behind the bloc's military brawn.[34]

Ironically, just as Arenas joined the FARC, its ties with the PCC began to loosen. The PCC claimed the FARC as its armed element, but then shortly thereafter suggested that the time was not ripe to use violence as the means to take control.[35] Similarly, with its first formal political declaration, the FARC showed that it would not heed the PCC party line. For example, the FARC stipulated that field laborers would be given rights to land that they worked but also allowed that the property rights of wealthy landowners who actively worked their own land would be respected. This was in contrast to another Marxist insurgency, the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN), which planned to set up all lands under a shared collective.[36]

Jacobo Arenas was in effect a cofounder of the FARC and an important member of the Secretariat. He led the FARC delegation in engaging in peace talks with the Betancur administration in the early- to mid-1980s. Arenas was also the strongest opponent within the Secretariat to entering the drug trade because he was concerned that it would corrupt. This voice was silenced when he died of natural causes on August 10, 1990, after which the FARC continued headlong into narcoterrorism. Perhaps more importantly, the FARC lost its best political mind.

Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas ("Jorge Briceño Suárez" or "Mono Jojoy")

Another important figure in the Secretariat was Jorge Briceño, who used the name "Mono Jojoy."[37,d] Jojoy was born on February 5, 1953, in Cabrera, a town forty-four miles southwest of Bogotá.[38] His parents were members of a Liberal self-defense force. His father was a guerrilla, and his mother, part of the auxiliary, cooked for the insurgent band. By the age of twelve, Jojoy was already acting as a messenger for the FARC.[39]

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[d] *Mono* refers to a person with blonde or reddish hair. Monojojoy is a jungle worm that is very difficult to catch.

Marulanda saw promise in Jojoy and began to mentor the youth. He even arranged for Jojoy to go to Moscow in the 1970s to receive political education and military training.[40] In 1975, Jojoy officially became one of the guerrillas and began working his way up the chain of command until he became leader of the Eastern Bloc, one of the seven members of the Secretariat, and eventually recognized as the second in command behind Marulanda.[41] Identified by his telltale black beret (perhaps a tribute to Che Guevara), Jojoy is credited with being the FARC's most demanding commander and the mastermind behind capturing high-value hostages and trading them for FARC prisoners.[42]

Because of his military prowess and the respect he received from Marulanda, Mono Jojoy was expected to ascend to the top of the Secretariat if Marulanda stepped down or was killed. However, when Marulanda died, Alfonso Cano took over, in part because the Secretariat was unable to form and vote on the matter.

Mono Jojoy was killed by the Colombian Army in an attack on September 23, 2010.[43] The Colombian Army obtained intelligence that he had diabetes and, as a result, required specific footwear. It obtained a pair that Jojoy ordered while the pair was in transit and embedded a tracking device that allowed an aerial attack.[44]

Luis Edgar Devia Silva ("Raúl Reyes")

Raúl Reyes was born into a poor Colombian family in 1948 as Luis Edgar Devia Silva. His father was a farmer, his mother a schoolteacher. Reyes became a union leader and member of the Communist Party in his youth while he worked at a Nestlé dairy in Caquetá.[45] Like Mono Jojoy, Reyes rose quickly through the ranks and married Marulanda's daughter.[46]

Reyes was a member of the Secretariat and also acted as the FARC's spokesman and negotiator. He first publicly fulfilled these roles during the Pastrana administration. As the FARC's public persona, Reyes engaged a number of important persons and groups. For instance, he met with Colombian authorities to discuss prisoner exchanges. In 1997, he also interfaced with a US Department of State Official in Costa Rica. Reyes also met with Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) operatives to arrange advanced training for FARC members.[47] Finally, Reyes is also considered the mastermind behind managing the FARC's high-profile hostage operations, such as the kidnapping of presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt.[48]

Reyes was killed by Colombian forces that attacked his stronghold in Ecuador on March 1, 2008. (Marulanda's death was only a week later, though it was not reported until May 2008.) After the attack, Colombian

forces obtained Reyes's laptop, which held valuable intelligence about the FARC's connections to various state and nonstate actors.

Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas ("Alfonso Cano")

Alfonso Cano did not fit the mold of a FARC leader. Next to Jacobo Arenas, he was the strongest ideologically, coming from a family of intellectuals. As a result, Cano was one of the FARC's connections into the leftist university scene.[49] Born as Guillermo León Sáenz on July 22, 1948, Cano grew up in Bogotá and was a student at National University when he got involved in radical movements and eventually joined the Communist Party's youth organization.[50] When Cano was released from having been in jail for six months as a result of his political activities, he left for the jungle and the FARC.[51]

Cano became the FARC's second most important political leader after Jacobo Arenas. When Arenas died, Cano ascended to his role and was the brains behind developing the FARC's most successful political party, the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica, or UP).[52] The party was formed as part of the peace process initiated by President Betancur in the early 1980s. After meeting all of the requirements stipulated in the peace agreement, the UP was allowed to submit candidates for office. It performed very well in the 1986 elections. Unfortunately, this was followed by the assassinations of party candidates, elected officials, and the massacre of UP members. This had a huge impact on the FARC, causing them to be reticent about putting down their weapons and politicizing, but most of all on Alfonso Cano:

The assault on the UP was particularly hard on Cano, who was one of the promoters of the idea of having the FARC form a political wing. The deaths of his friends and companions in that movement, particularly given the closeness of many in the Uribe government to the paramilitary units, may make Cano unwilling to negotiate in any meaningful way.[53]

Simón Trinidad ("Federico Bogotá")

Simón Trinidad is the nom de guerre of Juvenal Ricardo Palmera Pineda, born July 30, 1950, to a wealthy landowning family in Valledupar, in the northern Colombian department of César. Extremely well-educated (and an active member of the local private club), Palmera attended the best schools in Valledupar and Bogotá before enrolling in Cartagena's Naval College and then studying economics at Bogotá's Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano and going on to an MBA from Harvard University, after which he worked for the Banco de Comercio (Commerce Bank) and became a professor at the Universidad Popular de César. An early supporter of UP since its inception in 1985, Trinidad

stole 30 million pesos and customer financial records from the bank where he worked and fled to the mountains to join the FARC in 1987. He then used the banking records to pick targets for kidnapping and extortion for the FARC. Intelligent and well-spoken, Trinidad rose quickly through the FARC ranks and by 1991 was commanding the 41st Front and, later, the Caribbean Bloc, where he was in charge of guerrilla propaganda. Trinidad was captured in Quito, Ecuador, in January 2004 and extradited to the United States in December that year to stand trial on drug trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism, using as evidence his involvement in preparing to use three kidnapped US contractors (Marc Gonzales, Keith Stansell, and Thomas Howes) as pawns in negotiating with the Colombian government for the release of dozens of FARC soldiers. Trinidad was tried in the US four times; three of the trials were declared mistrials as a result of hung juries. It was only in the second of the four trials that Trinidad was convicted of a charge: conspiring to hold the three US citizens hostage; on January 28, 2008, he was sentenced to sixty years in prison, which he is currently serving at the ADX "Supermax" prison in Florence, Colorado.

COMPONENTS OF THE INSURGENCY

Underground and Auxiliary

The FARC's underground movement became an important force in the FARC's growth because it created a bridge between urban and rural elements within the insurgency, increased awareness and membership among the Colombian population, and enhanced the insurgency's political influence, power, and control. To connect the urban worker with the rural farmer at the Seventh Guerrilla Conference in 1982, the FARC capitalized on Colombian urbanization and created los Núcleos de Solidaridad (Solidarity Nuclei) or Juntas Patrioticas.[54,55] These solidarity nuclei were composed of union members, students, and peasants who were sympathetic to the FARC's leftist ideology. This underground organization embedded itself in schools, universities, civil action groups, and the UP to rally the masses to support left-wing politicians, encouraging them to vote for measures that supported FARC ideology, and to help recruit new members. The FARC took advantage of the civil unrest that existed during this period of urbanization and used the underground to help recruit from the urban poor who struggled with poor wages and working conditions. University students supported the FARC's underground by talking to people about problems of the urban poor and collecting information on the social and political views of peasants who had moved to the cities.[56] Recognizing that

the conditions for urban insurrection were already present, the Secretariat surmised that a revised approach could attract guerrillas and build an underground in Colombia's cities. Jacobo Arenas suggested:

> In the [Seventh Guerrilla] conference it was said: the persistence of social struggles has to be given a new emphasis. And the FARC-EP must design a strategy that responds to the social conditions that exist within the nation. And in the conference it was decided that the FARC-EP had to develop a struggle that would tie the armed revolutionary activities of the countryside with the insurrectional activities of the country's major cities . . . That is to say, everything should function as one strategic concept that would serve to define the taking of power.[57]

In addition to recruiting new members and spreading the FARC's ideology, the FARC underground also used coercion to exert influence. The FARC's underground began to strong-arm government officials with a combination of bribery and intimidation. As a result of FARC subversion, the Colombian government itself suggested at one time that almost sixty percent of country's mayors collaborated with the insurgents in one form or another.[58] The underground elements evolved from arm twisting to forming six-man cells that conducted improvised explosive device (IED) attacks and caused other forms of disruption. The FARC has used IED attacks against an array of targets, such as Colombian politicians and US oil company pipelines.[59] Also integral to the underground was the formation of urban militias to support the Solidarity Nuclei, known as the Bolivarian and Popular militias. Their primary duties included gathering intelligence, sabotage, collecting taxes, and recruiting more members.[60] The Bolivarian Militia was the more advanced of the two as it received political indoctrination and conducted military operations in rural areas for part of the year.[61] Both received direction from the EMC to ensure that their activities incorporated both military and political lines of operation. According to Marulanda, the popular militias in particular were "made up of those whose age or physical condition prevents them from direct combat with the enemy."[62] By the early 1990s, the FARC's underground was divided into seven operational regions: Northern (Caribbean), Northwestern (bordering Panama), Middle Magdalena (along the Venezuelan border), Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern; and each region had a military bloc associated with it.[63]

Armed Component

At the beginning of 1982, the FARC appeared much as it did shortly after its birth in 1964, with its military activity concentrated in rural areas, especially where sharecropping dominated. Despite early efforts to establish a political framework, especially through education of the FARC's leadership, its rhetoric remained immature. There were still only around 1,000 guerrillas in seventeen fronts in Colombia's south and southwestern regions.[64] The ranks comprised solely of rural peasants, farmers, and laborers who relied on their home community for logistical support. Though able to survive, the FARC was still relatively inexperienced and ill-equipped. As a result, its kinetic actions focused on small, isolated Colombian Army and National Police units and lacked significant impact.[65] However, this trend changed beginning with the Seventh Guerrilla Conference in May 1982.

The Seventh Conference was a turning point in the FARC's armed component as it transitioned from a defensive organization to an offensive one. The Seventh Conference marked a new eighteen-year strategic plan to expand FARC operations and defeat the Colombian government. During this time, the FARC planned to build its army to eventually surround major cities, which would require at least 28,000 troops by 1990 and a larger budget to finance the expansion.[66] To stress the new offensive nature of the group, the FARC added "Ejército del Pueblo" or "People's Army" to its name, making its new official acronym FARC-EP.[67]

Figure 6-2. FARC-EP flag.

To reinforce its new strategic decision, the FARC sent military personnel to the Soviet Union and Vietnam for training and created a military academy to form a new irregular revolutionary army. These developments forced the FARC to extract more war taxes from the areas under its control.[68] The FARC budgeted for about $56 million

to account for the increase of forces from 13,200 in 1989 to 18,000 in 1992. This money was "to be spent on arming, training, and upgrading the command, control, and communication system."[69] As a result of these efforts, the FARC almost doubled its army in the first seven years after the Conference, with forty-four fronts in 1989, and continued to increase to sixty fronts in 1992.[70] In addition to expanding its army, the FARC also reorganized its military structure to parallel that of the Colombian government's.[71] The FARC's main tactical unit is composed of two columns with approximately 150 to 200 armed combatants.[72] The FARC surpassed its expansion goals when by 2000 it controlled seventy fronts divided into seven regional blocks with fifteen independent companies and a few mobile columns available for additional support.[73]

Although some of the FARC forces were concentrated in Caquetá, most of its troops were "strategically scattered throughout the country."[74] In the 1990s, the FARC also extended to new strategic areas outside of the planned expansion—the eastern slopes of the Andean Mountains—so that it could "move the war closer to urban centers and intermediate cities, and exert more political pressure on the state and the dominant class and increase its rent extraction."[75] The group developed a "professionalized-full time army"[76] by the end of 1990, with representation in 622 of Colombia's 1,071 municipalities (fifty-eight percent). By the late 1990s, the FARC had also become more coercive toward local populations, especially as paramilitary groups in FARC areas changed the dynamics of the conflict and the FARC became involved in the narcotrafficking economy.[77]

Public Component

The FARC had a two-pronged public component: public service and political participation through the UP. By offering public services including education, health care, and a semijudicial system to those living in FARC-controlled regions, the FARC gained both legitimacy and following, drawing peasants and urban youth to the communal lifestyle espoused by FARC propaganda. The FARC acted like a state in some departments, especially in rural areas with little government presence. In these areas, it maintained monopoly control of the use of force while also providing for the citizens in the area.[78] The FARC offered transportation, built landing strips, provided health care and education, and even adjudicated disputes between citizens. Outside of some symbolic government entities in these rural areas, the FARC was the "sole provider of essential public services."[79]

However, the FARC illustrates its mixed legal–illegal approach in its funding of these services. The FARC collected taxes for public

works projects, much like a state, and through other illegal means. By the 1990s, the FARC's tax-collection methods became more complex, involving "intermediaries such as neighborhood councils (Juntas Acción Communal, JAC) subcontractors, and municipal councils"[80] to negotiate on its behalf and lending political support to the group. The FARC often used coercive methods to collect financial support for public works. The group often forced public officials, including governors, local council members, mayors, and senators, to invest in its public works programs by publicly citing the officials' corruption and through other guerrilla justice, including assassination.[81] The FARC is able to continue such coercive behavior because it "controls all police, judicial and governmental functions in dozens of other smaller rural areas."[82]

The second part of the FARC's public component was its creation of the UP, which the guerrilla organization established in the 1980s through a partnership with the Colombian Communist Party. The FARC aimed to "address peasant grievances through negotiation and political processes as opposed to resorting to violence"[83] through the UP party platform, which advocated anticorruption policies and liberal land and economic reforms. The development of the UP was yet another result of the strategic planning of the Seventh Guerrilla Conference and was one way the FARC aimed to enter mainstream politics, extending its influence to urban areas.[84]

However, given this leftist agenda, right-wing paramilitary groups heavily targeted UP members—at least 3,000 were murdered or disappeared in the early 1980s. It is estimated that "between 1986 and 1990, more than four thousand members of the UP and Communist Party were assassinated."[85] The UP struggled to survive as paramilitary groups and narcotraffickers continued to target its members. The assassination of a leading UP presidential candidate, Jaime Pardo, in 1987 and several other top leaders led to a mass exodus from the party, killing FARC chances for legitimate political participation and pushing the guerrilla organization to pursue violence and "military tactics as their only path to achieve political influence."[86] This turning point led the FARC to abandon participation in the legitimate political process and instead led the organization to turn to illegal means of sustainment and influence: the narcotics trade.[87]

IDEOLOGY

The FARC's ideology is grounded in revolutionary Marxist–Leninist thought. Inspired by similar movements in Cuba and other neighboring countries, the FARC embraced anticapitalist and nationalist rhetoric, which spoke to landless peasants in rural Colombia who lacked the

political voice to stand up to the new elitist conservative government. In the Eighth National Conference, the FARC political declaration stated, "We have tried persistently to find the paths that lead us to a democratic peace, to a peace of social justice . . . and each time we have stumbled against the violent opposition of a militarized oligarchy."[88] Themes such as social justice and security resonated deeply with new FARC recruits and served to unite current FARC members. However, over time the FARC's loyalty to its ideology waxed and waned as profits from the narcotics trade appealed to the group. Unlike the ELN and other groups, the FARC lacked ideological unity and "suffered from a deteriorated organizational cohesion."[89] For this reason, the FARC was not purely motivated by grievance; rather, greed played a more important role, making the FARC less ideologically pure than some of the other groups.

LEGITIMACY

Serving as a mediating force in rural Colombia, the FARC used several methods to garner legitimacy. One of its most effective methods was to provide services to peasants such as protecting them against elite landowner's policies and providing education, food, and supplies, which made the FARC an "acceptable alternative to the Colombian government."[90] In protecting small landowners and peasant workers against large landowners and military, whom the peasants and landowners thought were serving solely the interests of the *latifundistas* (large landowners), the FARC gained local power and legitimacy and became "the legitimate organizing body for peasants."[91] As such, the FARC often adjudicated local disputes, policed areas under its control, protected subsistence farming, and created cooperatives for and provided education to peasants in exchange for a "progressive income tax."[92] The FARC also taxed beer and served as sort of a morality police, punishing drug and alcohol use, violence, and other social crimes. The Colombian government in effect allowed the FARC to have some autonomy in its regions called demilitarized zones, or *zona de despeje*, in 1998.[93] In the *despeje*, the FARC erected flags, exerted total territorial control, and even issued "passports" to workers who entered and left the *despeje*. In effect, the *despeje* was their own country.

In addition to providing services, the FARC also had several active propaganda campaigns that emphazied a number of themes. One of the most prominent themes is that the FARC is a legitimate force that must be taken seriously. The FARC leadership, for instance, is shown throughout its various print media striking inspirational poses or

standing before a bank of microphones to imply the trappings of political importance.

There is also a clear emphasis on highlighting youth members, especially female soldiers. This is likely to support recruiting by emphasizing two things. First, spotlighting female soldiers sends a message that the FARC is not simply a band of macho jungle fighters; it has universal appeal and, therefore, universal membership. It also reinforces the Marxist ideal of individual empowerment for all, emphasizing liberation from oppression, which would resonate strongly with women in a macho society. Around forty-five percent of FARC guerrillas are female.[94] However, once in the FARC, women are still cast in traditionally sexist roles of cooking and caring for the guerrillas; while many do see frontline action, it is far more difficult for them to get to that point and fight as equals alongside the men they serve. Second, it supports the recruitment of young men who may not be attracted to the austerity of a monastic life in the bush but would consider membership in a coed atmosphere, especially because the guerrillas are encouraged to form intimate relationships.

As a result, the FARC encouraged women to join the movement and foster romantic relationships with the FARC's male members. However, women were discouraged from becoming pregnant, forcing those who were to either leave the movement or have an abortion, for which she will be sent to one of the FARC's many clinics facilities in the jungles of Colombia.[95] The lovers of higher-level commanders, however, have been allowed to keep their babies, fostering resentment amongst the lower ranks. This disparity of treatment, resulting in the destruction of a soldier's nascent family, is used in information operation campaigns by the Colombian government to encourage defection. The FARC's attempts to include young, attractive people to the group bolstered its image among its new recruits.[96]

In addition to enlisting women members, the FARC also recruited children to the movement, especially those whose parents were unable to care for them, offering the FARC as an alternative to their own families. The FARC "reached out to poor, uneducated rural youth and emphasized not its Marxist ideology but rather 'three square meals per day' and the vision of a prosperous future."[97] Often the FARC would give money to parents for their children, effectively buying soldiers as young as eight.

Propaganda videos also depict the FARC as a new family unit. The videos show all the "normal" activities of life, in addition to guerrillas training, marching, and going on patrols. There are scenes of men and women cooking, washing clothes, dancing, and even playing soccer. The viewer gets a sense that FARC members enjoy their communal

life. They may be remote, but they are able to enjoy an existence that is free of government oppression. All of these recruiting films are laced with patriotic-sounding music, marches that proclaim FARC accomplishments, and proclamations of what the movement will do for the Colombian people.[98]

Music and antigovernment and anti-US messages are found in other videos that focus more on proliferating the FARC narrative both inside and outside the organization. For example, on The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia YouTube channel, there is a video entitled "El Gorila." In this film, President Álvaro Uribe is a gorilla-marionette controlled by "Uncle Sam," representing the United States. They are shown with United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or AUC) paramilitaries who attack Colombians citizens performing a traditional dance. By the end of the video, through song, the FARC folk singers make it clear that they will put an end to this tyranny.[99]

The FARC faced three major challenges to its methods of legitimacy. First, the presence and violent confrontations of the paramilitary groups threatened the FARC's ability to govern its areas of control. Second, the end of the UP (as a result of paramilitary attacks) crushed the FARC's opportunity to exert its influence through legitimate political participation. Third, the FARC had strategic expansion plans that needed a great deal of funding, but it lacked legitimate methods for collecting war and protection taxes. As a result the FARC directed increased violence not only toward right-wing paramilitaries, but also toward the civilian populations it controlled.[100]

As the FARC struggled to survive amid the government's counterinsurgent campaign in the twenty-first century, its counteroffensive alienated most Colombians. As the military forced the FARC to cede territory, the group seeded the land with mines. In order to increase the likelihood and severity of infection, the shrapnel was coated with excrement. Over the course of several years, the mines killed more than 6,000 civilians, many of them poor farmers and their children. The FARC's frequent attacks on oil pipelines have created environmental disasters and depleted revenues of local and national governments. In a desperate move to refill their ranks, the FARC also lowered its official recruiting age to twelve.

In 2008, a thirty-three-year-old Colombian man launched a Facebook campaign against the FARC called "One Million Voices Against FARC." His message was simple, "No more kidnapping, no more lies, no more FARC." Within several days, his Facebook page had 250,000 followers. A month later, the campaign inspired massive protests against the FARC in Bogotá. Estimates of participants range from 500,000 to

2 million.[101] Thousands more joined the protests in over a dozen cities in the United States, Venezuela, France, and other countries. As one Colombian expatriate in the United States remarked, "We want the world to know we're tired. What the FARC has done is just the limit. They've killed people, and we're tired." The sentiments expressed in the campaign especially targeted the FARC's use of kidnapping and hostages. At the time, the group held around seven hundred hostages.[102]

MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

The FARC's primary goal as a group during its initial stage from 1964 to 1982 was survival and self-defense; however, after the Seventh Conference, the FARC went from a defensive organization to an offensive one. In its initial stage, the FARC positioned itself as self-defense groups in the Independent Republics, focused on ambushing small military units to obtain weapons and equipment; raiding farms for sustenance; and settling scores with informers.[103] Early on the group donned as much of the accoutrement of a uniformed army as possible and established a set of regulations to govern the guerrilla's behavior.[104] Individual FARC members, however, were mostly motivated by a "desire for belonging, camaraderie, respect, or even adventure."[105] According to a survey of first-hand interviews, other reasons for joining include revenge, family tradition, and lack of other viable options.[106]

The FARC has shifted its motivations from self-defense to the offensive goals of "destruction of the Colombian state and its replacement by a FARC-controlled government."[107] As part of its strategic expansion, the FARC claims that "once the group reaches its target of recruiting and arming 30,000 combatants it will initiate a 'final offensive' against the regular armed forces and take over the organs of the national government."[108] It was during this rapid expansion of recruitment that the Colombian military intelligence was able to infiltrate the FARC with its own operatives or turn some of the less committed new recruits. At the same time the FARC planned to launch a final offensive, it engaged in several rounds of negotiations with the government, most likely in a strategic effort to buy critical time for the organization to develop its operational capacity.[109]

In addition to its plans to dominate the Colombian government, the FARC also faced another challenge that forced the FARC to change its behavior. The FARC did not actively initiate a rivalry between other leftist guerilla groups operating during the same period. The groups shared a basic ideology and also a common enemy in the Colombian government. At times the leftist guerrilla groups clashed, but the groups had "an unwritten agreement to maintain boundaries . . . and

at a minimum [had] coordination and at a maximum cooperation between these groups preceding the 1990s."[110]

However, with the rise of paramilitary groups in the 1990s aimed specifically at reducing FARC influence, a competition for resources and territory forced the FARC to change its behavior. Most notably, the group began to target civilians. The FARC also needed to increase its funding to better fight the paramilitaries as well as the government, leading the FARC to demand higher protection taxes through coercion of its local populations and increasing its involvement in the drug trade.[111]

In the early 1990s, the FARC altered it demands in response to a greater US neoliberal influence in the Colombian economy. The FARC introduced a new organizational goal: reducing US influence in Colombia.[112] The FARC did not agree with the US-dominated neoliberal economic policy the Colombian government sought to implement in return for US financial support. Principles like trade liberalization and privatization ran counter to the FARC's Marxist ideology, and the FARC thought these policies further enriched the "oligarchy" it sought to overthrow. Instead, the FARC supported protectionism and import substitution industrialization to protect Colombian industry and peasants from fluctuations in the world market and provide a strong domestically oriented economy.[113] Furthermore, the FARC opposed extradition of Colombian narcotraffickers (known as *los extraditables*) to the United States and sought to control strategically important areas of the country where coca and poppy were cultivated.[114]

The FARC has implemented five general strategies to reach its goals: (1) have enough financial support to allow its autonomy; (2) use this funding to increase its guerrilla army; (3) be recognized as a major negotiating power in Colombian peace talks; (4) support relations with other developed countries as a way to decrease American influence over Colombia; and (5) exclude political rivals from the negotiating table by insisting on bilateral talks with the government.[115] The first goal is pursued by a combination of drug trafficking, kidnappings, extortion, and contributions from sympathetic state and nonstate groups, including most notably Venezuela's Chavista regime. The second goal is pursued via aggressive recruitment tactics including false propagandist promises targeting poorer and more marginalized sectors of Colombian society (including indigenous groups) emphasizing a steady income and social stature, as well as outright buying of children. To achieve its own greater stature in the previous and current peace talks, the FARC has pursued strategically timed and placed acts of violence, including the detonation of IEDs and attacks on police and military installations, while pursuit of the fourth goal has driven it to seek close ties with

Venezuela, Cuba, and the rest of the ALBA alliance, as well China and Iran. Because of this, 2013's peace talks took place in Cuba.

OPERATIONS

Paramilitary

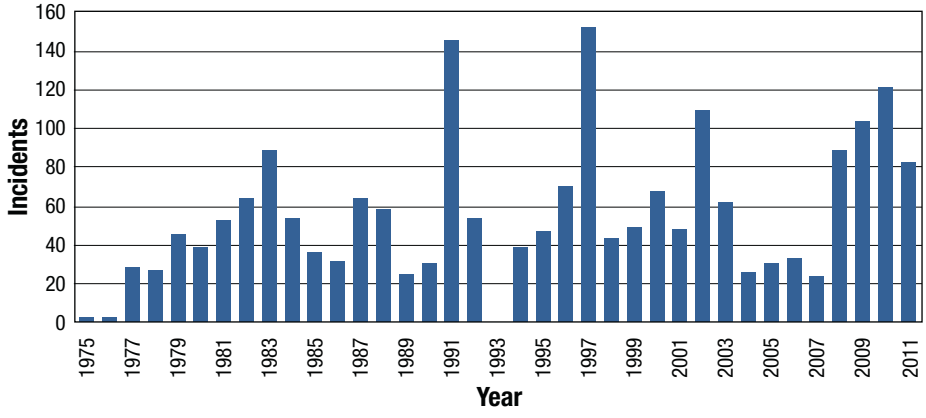

Figure 6-3. FARC incidents over time.

Until the 1980s, the FARC's paramilitary fought inequitable land redistribution and reform of the Colombian government. Organized as small groups of local peasants, the FARC engaged in small clashes with large landowners. As a result of Plan LAZO in the early 1960s, which sought to quell the supposed communist uprising in the rural south, the FARC's initial self-defense groups also fought the Colombian military. Until the early 1980s, the FARC's paramilitary operations consisted of these small bands of guerrilla fighters. As the group's armed component matured, the FARC leadership attempted to transition to maneuver or conventional warfare, but it was thwarted by effective Colombian counterinsurgent tactics.

The FARC's early paramilitary operations were guided by strategic decisions made during the 1982 Seventh Guerrilla Conference. While there, the FARC leadership developed an eight-year plan entitled "Strategic Plan for Taking Power." The plan had three phases: "offensive," "government," and "taking power." The overall intent was to create the necessary conditions to incite popular insurrection throughout Colombia. With the right level of chaos from the masses, it was expected that the Colombian military would take over and impose martial law as it did during the 1948 *Bogotazo* and the 1951 coup d'état. Then, the FARC would lead the people in a siege of military and police strongholds and

the capital. Once Bogotá capitulated, the FARC would form a revolutionary assembly that would draft a new constitution.

As part of these efforts, during the mid-1980s the FARC's efforts focused on developing its political wing, the UP. When the struggle focused on politics more than kinetic operations, the FARC strengthened its lines of operation in intelligence to infiltrate Colombian society. The FARC was consistently able to obtain information on politicians, political candidates, and wealthy businessmen with enough fidelity to kidnap them for ransom. Perhaps equally important, through its underground and auxiliary, the FARC constructed a sophisticated intelligence collection capability to identify new recruits and develop the information needed for complex attacks.

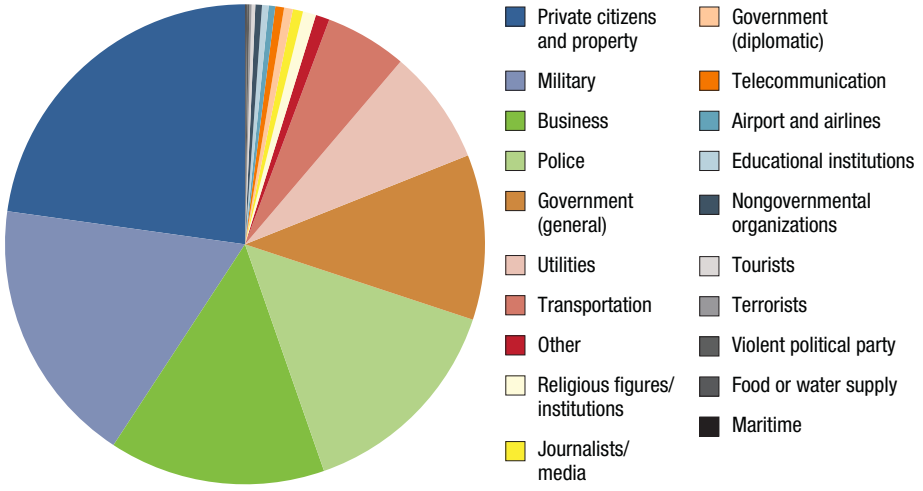

Figure 6-4. FARC target types.

As it has for much of its history, in the early 1990s, the FARC pursued a dual-pronged strategy that combined peace negotiations with the Colombian government and military operations. However, the sweeping assassination of UP members by paramilitaries in the late 1980s convinced many in the leadership that a political solution through the legitimate political process was unlikely. Jacobo Arenas, one of the staunchest supporters of a political solution, also died of natural causes in 1990. Arenas maintained the necessity of battling on multiple fronts, the military, political, economic, and social, in order to apply sufficient pressure to induce government concessions. His death provided an opportunity for those favoring a military solution to prevail. President Gaviria's decision to decline the FARC's participation in the constitutional reform process in 1990 confirmed the wisdom of this approach for those in the FARC who doubted the decision.[116]

The renewed military campaign after Gaviria's refusal launched a brutal period in the early 1990s. As Figure 6-3 illustrates, there was a sharp spike in FARC activity in 1991. The FARC increased its operations, ultimately resulting in a military attack on La Casa Verde, the former headquarters of the FARC, in late 1990.[117] La Casa Verde was symbolic, holding an emotional significance for the FARC. In response, the FARC entered into an alliance of convenience with the ELN in order to expand the scope of its paramilitary operations against the groups' common enemy. In late 1990, the FARC and ELN began a large-scale, coordinated, guerrilla campaign they called "Operation Wasp," one of the largest in Colombia's history. More than 130 people were killed and 200 wounded within the first two days.[118] As part of this campaign, the FARC mounted attacks against police and military forces across the country. On January 2, 1991, alone, the FARC launched simultaneous armed assaults against police forces in six separate departments in the south, southeast, and northern regions of the country.[e]

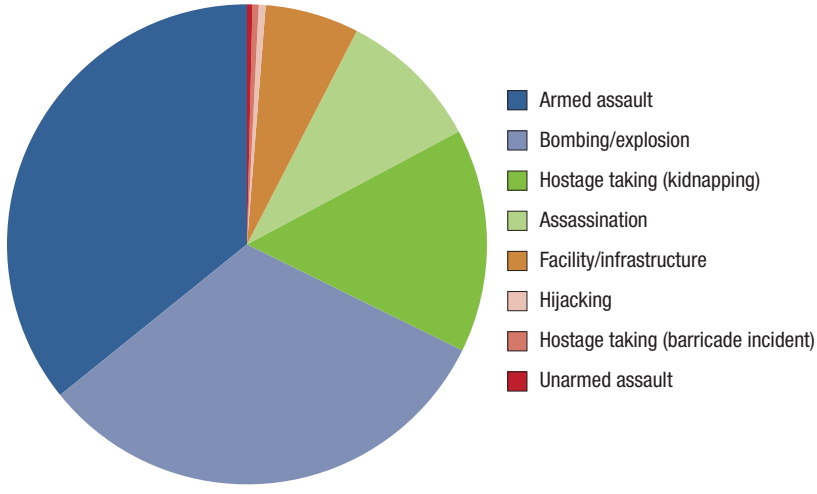

Figure 6-5. FARC attack types.

After forming an alliance with ELN, the FARC formulated a plan to sabotage the Colombian infrastructure and economy. Throughout its history, the FARC often used these symbolic and strategic infrastructure sabotage operations. The attacks destroyed critical infrastructure, exacted significant economic damages, and detracted legitimacy from the government, curtailing its ability to provide basic services to the population in the area. Figure 6-5 shows the significance of facility/

[e] The departments included Guaviare, Arauca, Santander, Antioquia, Boyacá, and Guajira. The data are from the Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

infrastructure attacks in the FARC repertoire.[f] While most of the FARC's attacks involved basic kinetic operations such as armed assault and bombings, attacks on facilities and infrastructure accounts for a sizable portion of the group's targets. The infrastructure associated with the oil industry was one of the FARC's favored targets. The long pipelines were very hard to defend, and oil represented the worst in capitalism, which the FARC believed led to the subjugation of the poor. Between 1986 and February 1991, more than 650,000 barrels of oil were spilled due to FARC attacks.[119]

As part of its renewed offensive, in late 1990, the FARC initiated a wide-ranging campaign against energy, transportation, electrical, and communications targets. The scope and breadth of the attacks across several departments speaks to the FARC's intelligence and planning capabilities. The bulk of the attacks took place in February. On February 6, 1991, the FARC assaulted several Ecopetrol[g] oil infrastructure assets in the Santander and Norte de Santander departments using explosives. Other targets included several pipelines in Antioquia and Putumayo departments within the space of two days. The country's transportation and communication nodes were also disrupted. The FARC used armed assaults and explosives to attack buses, toll booths, bridges, fuel trucks, and airports in at least five departments throughout January and February. During the same period, the FARC also attacked electric substations, high-tension line pylons, radio stations, and telecommunications transmission towers in several different departments.[h] In a testament to the extent of economic damage levied by the FARC, one attack on a coal mine in the César Department resulted in $2 million in damage. By the end of February 1991, the oil industry took a hit of $100 million.[120]

Following the renewed campaign, Gaviria initiated peace talks with the FARC and the ELN. As it did during many of the negotiations, the FARC used the negotiations to showcase its strength vis-à-vis the Colombian state in the limelight of domestic and international media. The insurgents participated in the negotiations without having agreed to a cease-fire and continued assaults on government and civilian targets, hardly a ringing endorsement for a strong central state. The negotiations ultimately failed as neither the insurgents nor the government made any concessions. After the FARC killed a prominent politician,

[f] Many attacks on facilities and infrastructure are also labeled as bombing/explosions for reasons unclear to the authors of this study.

[g] Ecopetrol is a state-owned petroleum company.

[h] The departments included Meta, Norte de Santander, Cauca, Santander, and Putumayo. The data are from the Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

Gaviria halted the talks and reignited the military fight against the leftist threat.

With its Eighth Guerrilla Conference in April 1993, the FARC began to strategize in earnest the transition to maneuver warfare. The FARC prepared the future of its political leadership by sending an elite cadre called "los cien sabios" or "the one hundred wise men" to universities abroad. Militarily, the FARC prioritized expanding its influence in southern Colombia, utilizing the "new method of operating" that married guerrilla-style and maneuver warfare tactics that emphasized "besiege, attack, overwhelm and retreat."[121] The method relied on large-scale guerilla columns that attacked security forces while simultaneous harrying the enemy with typical hit-and-run guerrilla tactics executed by smaller guerrilla elements. The southern departments in Colombia, such as Putumayo and Caquetá, offered potential strategic advantages to the FARC. The area was rich in coca development. The FARC leadership required the revenue the region promised to deliver in order to bankroll the group's expected growth. Additionally, the southern departments bordered Ecuador, which the leadership anticipated using to supply and support the guerrillas. The departments' many rivers and streams also could also act as important transit routes to other FARC areas of influence farther to the northeast.[122]

The move to large-scale offensive operations, the FARC believed, would culminate in a general mass uprising. In order to manipulate events, the FAR began to build its urban networks in Bogotá in earnest.

The FARC wielded its "new method" of mobile warfare with great sophistication against the Colombian government in the latter half of the 1990s. During this period, the FARC leadership developed a strategy to clear swathes of territory of a government presence and isolate Bogotá from the rest of the country. One of the hallmarks of this campaign was the 1996 attack on Las Delicias, a military base in the Putumayo department. The successful strike left fifty-four Colombian soldiers dead and sixty more prisoner. The attack on Las Delicias was followed a week later by another that killed an additional thirty Colombian soldiers.[123]

The FARC's strategy also called for debilitating the political order in the country. As a result, throughout the country, the FARC assassinated Colombian government officials, including mayors, governors, and other representatives of the central government.[124] This meant that local officials and civic leaders were at the mercy of the armed groups. Just prior to the 1997 regional elections, the FARC succeeded in murdering 110 political candidates and activists, kidnapped 244 more, and forced the withdrawal of 359 mayoral candidates. In total, twenty-two municipalities in Colombia went without any candidates at all.[125]

The FARC's intelligence capabilities proved an important component of its paramilitary operations. In two instructive examples, the FARC used covert insurgents posing as civilians to gather intelligence. As part of the planning for the 1996 attack on Las Delicias, members of the FARC underground sought employment on the base. Others joined a soccer league that competed there. One member of the FARC underground even befriended the base commanding officer and became his "fishing buddy."[126] In a second example, the FARC used locals to gather information on troop disposition within a Colombian Army unit operating in the Caguan River region in 1998. As a result, the insurgents were able to inflict a devastating blow that wiped out 107 of the unit's 154 soldiers.[127]

Thus, during the Samper administration, the FARC's power, in both numbers and action, steadily grew, reaching its peak from 1996 to 1998.[128] During those years, the FARC "inflicted 18 consecutive defeats on [*sic*] the army, regularly mobilizing units of 1,500 to 2,000 troops to attack military outposts manned by a few hundred men."[129] One particularly damaging ambush occurred in March 1998 when the FARC surprised, and nearly annihilated, the 52nd Counterguerilla Battalion part of the 3rd Mobile Brigade. The battalion, like the brigade, was an elite military unit comprised entirely of professional, well-trained soldiers. The FARC killed sixty-two soldiers and took another forty-three prisoner. The revelation that the 52nd Battalion was on a special mission to capture FARC leader Mono Jojoy and return the state's law to the area, was especially demoralizing for the military and damaging for the Samper administration.[130]

The Samper administration suffered from a number of crippling weaknesses. Early on in his election campaign, his political rivals revealed evidence of Samper's connections with the Cali cartel. Despite winning the election, Samper's administration operated under a cloud of suspicion. The impact of the suspicions were also felt internationally, leading President Clinton to revoke Samper's US visa as well as those of several senior military commanders implicated in the scandal. Relations deteriorated to such an extent that there was little official contact between the two governments.[131] As a result, when facing a significant threat from the leftist insurgency, Samper's government was cut off from US aid and advice.[132]

Likewise, the Colombian military became increasingly ineffective against the onslaught of the FARC's campaign. In 1997, a US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) warned that the fall of the Colombian government was imminent. It lambasted the military as "inept, corrupt, ill-trained and poor equipped." The FARC, meanwhile, had an ample war chest gained from drug trafficking. With the funds, it acquired

Soviet-bloc weapons, such as surface-to-air missiles, and ferried its soldiers and supplies with a small air force. Later, a senior leader from US Southern Command confirmed those sentiments and voiced doubt that the Colombian military was capable of defending the government. It had already ceded almost half of the nation's territory to the group. The military offset its own weakness by relying on paramilitary organizations to confront the leftist guerillas. The paramilitary's excessive and brutal violence devastated the civilian population frequently the target of its armed operations.[133,i]

It is difficult to overstate the strength of the FARC's position against the Colombian state in the late 1990s. Since its transition to a guerilla organization almost decades before, its manpower increased over 1,800 percent to around 18,000. The FARC's soldiers were distributed across sixty-one rural fronts, four mobile columns, fifteen mobile companies, and five urban fronts. Every department in Colombia housed a FARC presence.[134]

The FARC launched a series of attacks on the eve of the presidential elections in 1998 from this position of military strength. The most damaging attack was against a counternarcotics base in Miraflores, Guaviare department. The 1,200 FARC insurgents overwhelmed the outnumbered military and police stationed there, leaving thirty killed, fifty more wounded, and one hundred prisoner. The Colombian public was ready for peace and some also thought that the FARC would be especially willing to negotiate an end to the conflict at the height of its military power. Andres Pastrana, a presidential candidate, bet on this likelihood as well. He met with the FARC leaders during his campaign and promised them a temporary demilitarized zone. Pastrana ran, and won the presidency, on this peace platform.[135]

As part of the negotiations orchestrated by Pastrana, the Colombian government granted the FARC a 16,200-square-mile demilitarized zone in striking distance of the capital and other major centers. As part of the agreement, the FARC was supposed to refrain from military activity in the demilitarized zone, or *zona de despeje*. However, the insurgents used the zone as a "sanctuary to launch operations, rest and refit its army, move drugs and arms, and even hold prisoners and hostages."[136] In early 2000, despite reaching a recent truce with the government, the FARC initiated a multifront attack from the *despeje* in which 800 FARC insurgents attacked military and police posts about 37 miles south of Bogotá. The attack also cut off communications between the national capital and Villavicenio, the capital city of the Meta department.[137]

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[i] See *Chapter 9. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)* for a description of the paramilitaries strategic use of violence against civilians.

After the turn of the century, the FARC continued its attacks and military and police posts and infrastructure. In 2000 alone, the FARC attacked 176 police posts. At this time police were thinly dispersed and maintained a presence in only seventy-five percent of the nation's municipalities. The attacks used homemade bombs from propane cylinders. The cylinders were filled with explosives, napalm, or tear gas and launched from improvised mortars in 55-gallon drums or larger canisters. The bombs proved notoriously inaccurate and often resulted in civilian casualties.[138] The FARC's acts of sabotage peaked in 2002, when the FARC carried out 283 such events. In addition to targeting Colombian infrastructure, the FARC also brought its operation to major urban centers. From 2000 to 2002, FARC rebels took armed action in the Bogotá, placing bicycle bombs around the city that killed and injured many civilians.[139] The attacks yielded only minor results, as their most important Bogotá cells, linked under the umbrella organization Red Urbana Antonio Nariño (RUAN), were infiltrated by Colombian military intelligence, who rounded most of them up in one night on Easter 2003. The few that escaped capture fled to the mountains, and the urban cells did not recover their strength until they waged strategic urban attacks just prior to and during the peace negotiations under the Pastrana administration. However, despite urban bombing campaigns in the early 2000s, the FARC "remains a largely rural and insular organization."[140]

After 2000, the Colombian military began to make more headway against the FARC.[j] In part, the military attributed the FARC's diminishing number of attacks at this time to the increased use of air power. The military's poorly planned and implemented defense had led a rash of army general officers to tender resignations. Following these difficulties, a number of factors coalesced, such as rotation due to seniority, out-of-sequence appointments, and others, and contributed the development of a more able command team in Colombia that began to make headway against the FARC.[141] One noticeable change was the transition to offensive, rather than defensive, operations. In the first six months of 2000 alone, the military carried out 1,808 counterinsurgent actions, killing over 500 insurgents. The entire previous year had seen only 855 counterinsurgent actions.[142]

In the twenty-first century, there was also a noticeable increase in FARC's coercive behavior toward civilians. Several human rights organizations documented that the FARC "killed 496 civilians nationwide, employing methods that resulted in avoidable noncombatant

[j] The increased effectiveness of Colombia's military forces, including support from the United States in Plan Colombia, will be discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 10. Government Countermeasures.*

casualties"[143] in 2000. Although the paramilitaries are especially infamous in their brutal treatment of civilians, the FARC proved equally destructive in 2003 and 2004. In June 2004, the FARC murdered thirty-four coca gatherers in Santander.[144] Several months later, the FARC detonated a mine and fired on a civilian vehicle in Antioquia, killing four civilians and injuring seventeen, including ten children.[145] Despite the increase in civilian casualties, the FARC's main targets were state military personnel, bases, and equipment.[146] In 2005, the FARC initiated perhaps it most comprehensive attacks in terms of the sheer size of its impact when it used explosives to demolish six energy pylons, which resulted in 2.3 million Colombians losing electrical power.[147]

In addition to temporarily controlling its own section of the Colombian countryside in the *despeje*, the FARC has been a powerful force throughout the country. At times, it controlled up to a third of the entire country. The FARC had the greatest level of control in the southeastern region and in the high plains, while the departments of Santander and Antioquia saw the highest levels of FARC violence. The daily lives of civilians living in areas under heavy FARC control were impacted, but these areas did not necessarily coincide with the areas of the most violent attacks.

Figure 6-6. Areas of armed action.

Administrative

Membership and Recruitment

The FARC's recruiting had two parallel goals: to grow the organization and to sustain the organization. To build the "little guerrilla army," the FARC had to target and recruit new members. Solidarity Nuclei

from the FARC's underground attracted members among Colombia's growing urban population. In fact, Colombia's Minister of Education indicated that the government monitored university students who may be have been sympathetic to the FARC and identified recruitment in public and private universities.[148] In general, the FARC sought "entry into the FARC by personal, voluntary, and conscious decision between the ages of fifteen and thirty."[149] However, the FARC has used "coercion, intimidation, or enticement, offering salaries twice that of the Colombian army."[150]

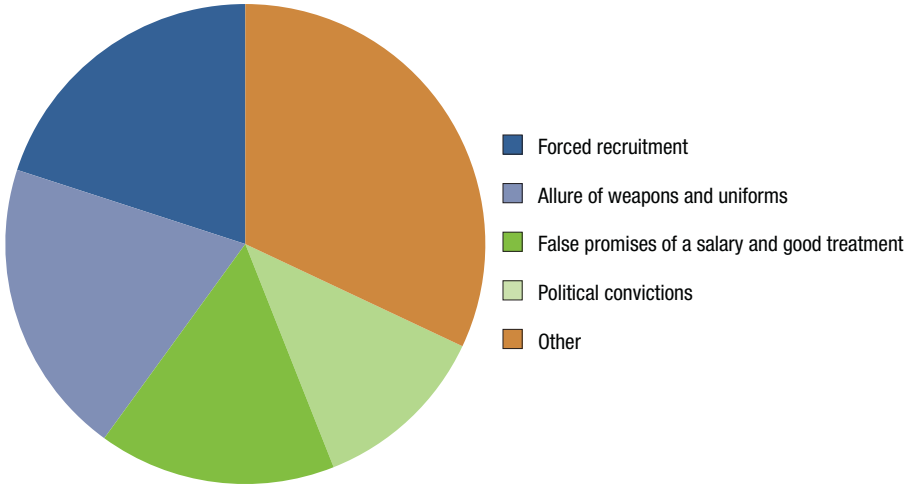

Figure 6-7. Reasons for joining the FARC.

Although some did emerge from the urban sources, the vast majority of the guerrillas were drawn from rural areas that provided a constant stream of candidates who were young, poor, and uneducated. These three characteristics combined to form a recruit who was strong, needy, and malleable. More specifically, the rural youth of Colombia often think their brightest future comes from serving the military or joining a paramilitary or insurgent group, such as the FARC. Recruiting material capitalized on this; so, although the literature would include Marxist–Leninist propaganda, it also emphasized getting three meals a day,[151] which persuaded youths to join the ranks. Faced with an uncertain future, those in these remote areas then chose the FARC (or another insurgent group, or one of the paramilitaries if they were present) because it was the one group that was around and offered opportunity.

To draw supporters, the FARC took advantage of Colombia's decentralized government structure and weak control in rural areas by straddling a front across two Colombian departments. Then, it would become the de facto government, working to ingratiate itself with the public.[152] After a start in the south, the FARC had formed a front in the Magdalena valley by 1969. By 1971, a third was in Urabá near

Panama.[153] From this start, the FARC sustained itself well enough that by the early 1980s, it was able to grow slowly as it latched onto Colombia's narcotics trade. FARC membership appeals to many for the decent salary of "about $350 a month, which is $100 more than a Colombian Army conscript."[154]

After an initial rapport was established, the FARC would also use coercion. At recruiting meetings, the candidates would be told to watch out for unwelcome strangers. Additionally, each person was informed that they had to decide which side they were on, and if they resisted joining, they had to explain "why they didn't want to be involved," implying that they could potentially be a spy.[155] However, when Human Rights Watch interviewed 112 FARC guerrillas, only thirteen reported being forced to join.[156]

The Colombian government claims that the FARC actually recruits children, using them as guerrillas and as part of the underground to collect intelligence.[157] Human Rights Watch puts a number on this accusation, stating that in 2003, approximately 4,100 of the regular guerrilla force were children. Add to this approximately one-third of the militias and the total number of children reaches about 7,400.[158,k] In the urban environments, the children sometimes even serve as the best recruiters. They begin by talking to potential recruits during casual interaction on the street. Then, they begin a pitch through a series of meetings. One youth recruiter said, "They chose pretty girls and handsome boys to the recruiting because the kids would fancy them. We'd say that we'd pay them and that life was good. We'd announce a meeting at school and people would turn up . . . .at the end of the meeting, people would join up."[160] Children soldiers were charged with some of the most brutal acts of combat because they "may not yet have developed a sense of justice or a strong sense of morality."[161]

Raúl Reyes refuted this notion at times, stating that the FARC did not recruit children and would not press anyone into service because it violated safety rules.[162] When it became blatantly obvious that there were children in the ranks, the FARC responded by saying that it was nearly forced to take them in because their families could not provide for them.[163] Once in the FARC, the guerrillas could not voluntarily leave, often leading to depression and suicide as the only way out.[164]

Recruitment differs depending on the location; for example, urban recruiting poses a greater security threat because Colombian intelligence operations are far more effective in the urban centers. Urban recruitment "tend[s] to be more deliberate and gradual, and they place

[k] According to Human Rights Watch, the Optional Protocol of the Geneva Convention on the Rights of the Child and international legal standards stipulate that anyone under the age of eighteen be considered a "child."[159]

greater emphasis on ideology because their targeted population is better educated."[165] On the other hand, rural recruitment can "afford to make a more direct and immediate approach to peasant communities, and they emphasize opportunity for food and economic success."[166]

Psychological

One key component of the FARC's ability to survive was its robust information operations capability, including the use of the Internet to express its concepts in written, photographic, and video formats. The insurgency has also invested hundreds of thousands of dollars (or more) in the maintenance and upkeep of twelve Internet pages, five clandestine radio stations, and various other means of communication.

Pre-eminent amongst its information operations is its monthly magazine, *Resistencia*, which is published in eight languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, English, French, German, Russian, and Swedish) and distributed in approximately 30 countries. Its format and rhetoric are based on *Iskra*, the first revolutionary paper founded in Russia by Lenin. While the first edition of *Resistencia* was published in 1964, it did not enter regular editorial production until 1978; in 1987, *Resistencia* started publishing two editions: national and international. While the national edition focuses on analyzing Colombia from the FARC point of view, the international edition is focused on informing the world of the "policies imposed by local oligarchies in alliance with North American imperialism," according to its own masthead. Furthermore, the FARC has its own global press agency, the Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa (The Bolivarian Press Agency), with offices all over the world, with a particular concentration in Europe and Latin America. The Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa also maintains its own YouTube channel: prensabolivariana. All these outlets have touted the work of the Movimiento Continental Bolivariano (the Bolivarian Continental Movement), which is headquartered in Caracas, Venezuela, since its founding on December 8, 2009, by 950 left-wing activists from 26 Latin American nations. At its opening session, it read a statement by FARC commander Simón Trinidad (causing erstwhile Colombian President Álvaro Uribe to condemn them as an organization that supports terrorism) and denounced Colombia's agreement to allow the US military increased access to its bases for counternarcotics and counterterrorism operations.

Such operations, although highly unusual for a criminal enterprise, are consistent with those of a revolutionary organization that aspires to acquire international support via the dissemination of political propaganda. These attempts by the FARC to spread its message to the international community further illustrate that, despite the guerrilla

organization's diplomatic and international isolation, it continues to seek support from abroad and to justify its war against the Colombian military as a legitimate struggle for "social justice."[167]

Political

As part of its long-term strategy, the FARC developed a strong political wing in the 1980s. The group's political wing, UP, was formed in early 1985 as part of a peace negotiation process. After meeting with FARC representatives in November 1989, the Colombian government agreed to the FARC's recommendation that it be allowed to form a political party in exchange for a cessation of hostilities. In March 1985, the FARC formed its first legal political party, known as the UP. Although it is clear that ties to the PCC were weak almost from the start, the FARC's formation of its own political party created a final, clear delineation between the two. This meant that the FARC continued to mature politically. It began to combine its guerilla approach with a strong political wing.

The UP grew in prominence in November 1985 in preparation for the elections and engaged in negotiations with the Colombian government in 1986. In October of that year, the FARC named several conditions for demobilization of its fronts: "1) that the state of siege would have to be lifted and the constitutional article (121) allowing for such a state revised and (2) that the controversial Article 120 (which required the president to give 'adequate and equitable' participation to the second-largest party in his government) would have to be disbanded."[168] Simultaneously, the party was able to elect fourteen members to congress, eighteen deputies into eleven department (the equivalent of a US state) assemblies, and 335 counselors in 187 municipal (county-like) councils.[169] The UP presidential candidate, Jaime Pardo Leal, garnered 4.5 percent of the popular vote.[170] However, any celebration on the part of the FARC was short-lived.

Paramilitary squads, some supposedly guided by Colombian intelligence, launched a campaign against the UP. Approximately 550 UP members, including Jaime Pardo Leal and four UP congressmen, were assassinated between 1985 and 1988.[171] Leal's successor, Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa, was assassinated in 1990. By 1998, more than 4,000 UP and PCC members were killed by right-wing paramilitaries.[172] John Otis reports that the dead included "everyone from office secretaries and mayors to two presidential candidates."[173] The FARC speculated that a nonviolent path might not be possible. Otis suggests that even more significantly, the best political minds in the FARC were lost, which had an ill effect on decision making later.[174] As a result, the FARC returned

to armed struggle, officially ending the truce in 1990.[175] Returning to a political or diplomatic solution was affected by these political assassinations; whenever someone suggested they lay down their arms as part of any peace agreement or negotiation, FARC members simply replied, "Unión Patriótica."[176] The FARC have made consistent demands for government action against paramilitary groups.

In April 1996 the FARC formed another political party. The development was part of the FARC's strategic plan, The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia. The plan recommended the formation of a new political party, the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party (PCCC), as a replacement for the UP. The party was formed shortly before the initiation of massive offenses by the FARC, including the attack on Las Delicias in 1996 described above. The PCCC was probably intended as the vehicle to take military-political control of the territory and populations that the FARC leadership expected to rapidly gain as part of its offensive. As such, it signaled the political savvy of the FARC leadership who, although proponents of political violence to achieve their objectives, still recognized the need for a political platform to disseminate ideas to the public and gain new supporters for their cause.[177]

A state within a state, the *despeje* became a FARC sanctuary. Within this region, the FARC was uninhibited in its ability to recruit, train, finance, and, in violation of the spirit of any demilitarized zone, launch attacks. Building up its force structure in both numbers and capability, the FARC began to launch a series of coordinated attacks from the *despeje*. For example, in July 1999, it conducted simultaneous assaults against government bases and facilities in the departments of Meta, Guaviare, Huila, Putumayo, and Caquetá. This was followed by an attack in January 2000 conducted by 800 guerrillas against Colombian police and military elements, some as close as sixty kilometers from Bogotá.[178]

Maintaining a political front in its struggle against the Colombian government, the FARC used the *despeje* for political purposes as well. It tried to establish the Independent Republic of the Caguan in a similar manner to the independent republics that were established in the 1960s and later in the 1980s.[179] In the 1960s, as an extension of the self-defense forces, the FARC and other Liberal and Communist elements constructed autonomous republics until the military came in and destroyed them between 1964 and 1966.[180] The FARC tried this again in 1986, forming three towns, Puerto Boyacá, Puerto Berrío, and Puerto Parra, into the Independent Republic of Middle Magdalena.[181] This time it was thwarted by Colombian paramilitaries that overwhelmed FARC forces, causing them to abandon the region.[182]

The FARC collected everyone between the ages of thirteen and sixty for three days of training and indoctrination to aid with population

control in the *despeje*.[183] Topics included Marxist–Leninist theory and use of heavy weapons.[184] Some of the people were formed into militias called "Citizen Vigilance" with tasking to spy, even on one another.[185] Still others were forced to perform manual labor to build up the *despeje's* infrastructure.[186]

The FARC's political control over the *despeje* was pronounced in three ways. First, it issued identification cards to 90,000 people across five municipalities.[1] Second, it controlled who could enter the territory. Third, and perhaps most important, it installed a judicial system that reduced crime.[187] The *despeje* also gave the FARC a place where it could train with other terrorist groups, such as the PIRA, unhindered.

In March 2000, the FARC held a Guerrilla Plenum. Its overarching goal was to develop the means to incite the whole population to join the revolution and wrest power from the Colombian government. To do this, the FARC implemented The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia.[188] The overall intent was to call not just Communists, but Bolivarians, those who saw the FARC as the means to unite Latin America, to act as an underground to spur the population toward policies that would support the Bolivarian revolution. These disparate cells were also supposed to draw new members to the cause, leading the nation toward the destruction of the government.[189]

EXTERNAL ACTORS AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

The FARC, though a Marxist–Leninist group at its inception, survived through the lean years of the 1970s and the fall of the Soviet Union in part because it did not emphasize ideology over its objectives and found support outside of Communism's largest supporter. Specifically, by evolving its rhetoric to include Bolivarianism, the FARC garnered support from other Bolivarian proponents, such as former President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. Similarly, the FARC endured as it begrudgingly engaged in the narcotics trade, but at the same time, it established and maintained connections with nonstate brethren, such as the Basque separatist group in Spain and France known as ETA and the PIRA.[190] As a result, through both state and nonstate support, the FARC enjoyed everything from tactical-level training in IEDs to head-of-state recognition.

The Colombian government suspected the FARC's ties to state and nonstate actors throughout the history of the conflict. From time to

[1] ETA is an acronym for Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, which in English is "Basque Homeland and Freedom."

time, the government enjoyed moments of success that pointed to these connections, such as the interception of three PIRA members as they tried to leave the country in the summer of 2001. The real coup came on March 1, 2008, when the Colombian Army attacked a FARC guerrilla outpost in Ecuador. During the attack, FARC leader Raúl Reyes was killed and his computer captured. The computer's hard drive was a rich source of information about FARC state and nonstate relations.[191] General Oscar Naranjo, commander of the Colombian National Police, said that the laptop had evidence of connections to Venezuela and Ecuador, but also to groups in Australia, France, Sweden, and Switzerland.[192] These claims were later confirmed by an Interpol examination of the hard drive and a full publication of its contents by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Nicaragua

President Daniel Ortega had established a relationship with the FARC in the 1970s when he was leader of the Sandinista rebellion in Nicaragua.[193] After ascending to office in 1979, he began to use the power of the presidency to support other Latin American revolutionaries. Two events exemplify Ortega's relationship with the FARC. First, in 1998, he awarded Nicaragua's highest decoration, the Augusto Sandino medal, to Marulanda.[194] Two years later, he personally attended a conference for revolutionary movements in Libya. The FARC was also present.[195] At the time, it hoped to obtain surface-to-air missiles so it could shoot down Colombian aircraft.[196] Communications on Reyes's computer revealed requests to Muammar Qadhafi for monetary support so that the FARC could obtain these missiles and appeals to Ortega to intercede with Qadhafi on the FARC's behalf.[197]

Ecuador

The San Miguel River marks the border between Colombia and Ecuador. The whole region is covered in jungle, making it a difficult region to manage and an excellent area in which to hide. Because of this terrain, Colombians often cross the border into Ecuador to escape Colombian law enforcement or government forces. A culture developed in the region that recognizes that it is an ungoverned space, and like many border regions, a zone that is accepting of the movement of people and materiel. The region even developed familial relations between guerrillas and Ecuadorans.[198] Ecuador became a major source of logistical support and sanctuary for the FARC.

After taking office in 2003, rather than embrace the FARC, President Gutiérrez tried to solidify relations with the United States instead. He supported the operation to capture Ricardo Palmera (also known as Simón Trinidad, as discussed above), who was extradited to the United States, charged, and eventually sentenced to sixty years in prison for kidnapping three American contractors. The FARC then moved on to support Rafael Correa. With the FARC's support of more than $100,000, he was elected and took office in 2007.[199] In his second inaugural address, Correa said he would "deepen democracy and radicalize this revolution."[200]

Venezuela

To have a sanctuary such as the *despeje* is a key factor in the success of any insurgency. The FARC first enjoyed sanctuary in Colombia's remote jungle regions. These expanded into both Ecuador and Venezuela as the FARC became connected with the Bolivarian movement. At a minimum, Chávez provided moral support to the FARC by sharing his Bolivarian principles and rhetoric. There are accusations that Venezuela ignores FARC attacks on, and kidnappings of, wealthy ranchers on the Colombia–Venezuela border and that the Venezuelan government has even provided the FARC with military assistance.

No nation can be wholly characterized by only one dominant player. Still, to understand Hugo Chávez is instructive in understanding some of the success the FARC enjoyed after his ascendency to power. Chávez was born in 1954 as the son of schoolteachers who were so poor he had to be raised by his grandmother.[201] A good athlete, he used his baseball prowess to obtain admission to the Venezuelan Military Academy. Chávez was commissioned in the Venezuelan Army in 1975 after completing a degree in engineering.[202]

Chávez developed sympathy for leftist insurgents early in his career. One of his first assignments was to suppress a Maoist insurgency. Chávez was sickened by the plight of the insurgents and became sympathetic. He recalls, "It is there [that] I began to see that the peasants were subject to huge repression. The army would burn their houses down, accuse them without respecting the rule of law."[203] Chávez became so concerned that by 1978, he started to connect with Venezuelan revolutionaries.

In 1979, Chávez returned to the military academy as a military ethics instructor.[204] Through this role he was able to influence many of the cadets who would later become part of the Venezuelan officer corps.[205] As he continued his own study of revolution in South America, Chávez

became enamored with Simón Bolívar. In 1982, he swore an oath similar to the one made by Bolívar almost 180 years before:

> I swear by the God of my fathers, I swear by my honor, and I swear by my homeland that I shall give no respite to my arm nor rest to my soul until we have broken the chains that the powerful have placed upon us.[206]

Several men took the oath with Chávez. Together, they formed the Bolivarian Revolutionary Army. Ten years later, in February 1992, Chávez led them in an unsuccessful coup against then–Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Pérez.[207] The coup failed, and Chávez spent two years in prison before being pardoned and released by the next president, Rafael Caldera. Chávez's sympathizers attempted another coup in November 1992, which also failed. Still today, 4F (for the 4th of February) is feted by the *chavistas* as a major holiday, marking the start of their Bolivarian Revolution.

Chávez's ascendance to power was very much a product of mass media. When his 4F coup failed, he was granted one minute of television to call down the troops in other parts of Venezuela. He took full responsibility for the day's violence and then said his revolution had failed "por ahora," "for now." It was enough to make him a cult hero, and he continued to give press interviews while in prison. "Por ahora" continues to be a rallying cry when any effort of the Bolivarian Revolution suffers a setback, and the *chavistas* remain masters at manipulating media and shaping their narrative.

Chávez started his own political party called the "Movement of the Fifth Republic" (MVR). He campaigned for the presidency in 1998 on a platform that espoused improvements to government, effective use of the country's oil resources, and an end to corruption. Like other Bolivarians, Chávez was anti-imperialist and thus vocally anti-United States. This approach resonated with the Venezuelan people. Chávez won the presidency and was inaugurated in February 1999. One of his first acts was to change the official name of the country to "The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela."[208]

Many Venezuelans were enamored with Chávez. He had a large audience each Sunday as he broadcast a chat show called "Aló Presidente," which sometimes would go on for at least four hours and was broadcast on every national network. During these programs, Chávez did everything from singing patriotic songs, to firing inept ministers, to ordering the seizure of private property to threaten war against Colombia.

Venezuelan ranchers residing near the border with Colombia have endured the FARC's kidnapping for ransom, violence, and murder. The ranching community has complained but to little effect. "Our

government is totally indifferent to the problem," said one rancher, "Our sovereignty is being violated, and the response we get is total complacency."[209] Many ranchers suggest it is because the government is sympathetic to the FARC.[210]

Some Colombians report that the Venezuelan Army has actually supported the FARC with close air support as it battles paramilitaries near the border. There was an attack on March 21, 2003, followed by another on March 28 when Venezuelans F-16s and OV-10s bombed paramilitary forces near Monte Adentro.[211] The next day, around 300 FARC soldiers burned the village down.[212] The Venezuelan ambassador to Colombia denied these charges. He said that Venezuelan forces were merely responding to paramilitary attacks on Venezuelan territory.[213]

Iran

Venezuela and Iran have strong ties. Iran also sought to support the FARC. In June 1999, Colombia's High Commissioner for Peace, the Iranian Ambassador to Colombia, and a member of Colombia's cattle industry signed an agreement to build the largest slaughterhouse and processing plant in Latin America.[214] The facility included an airstrip longer than any at Bogotá's international airport so that large aircraft could fly the meat nonstop to Iran.[215] After making inquiries, it was discovered that there was not enough cattle in the *despeje* to support such an endeavor.[216] The CIA surmised that the plant was likely a front for receiving aircraft from Iran delivering support for the FARC.[217] The CIA recommended to the Colombian military that construction of the facility be blocked.[218]

The PIRA

In 2001, members of the PIRA traveled to the *despeje* to assist the FARC. The Irish delegation included Niall Connolly, Sinn Féin's (the PIRA's political wing) representative in Cuba; Jim "Mortar" Monaghan, the PIRA's head of engineering and inventor of its first improvised mortars; and Martin MacAuley, Monaghan's deputy.[219] The three were caught by Colombian authorities on August 1, 2001, as they tried to board a flight out of the country. Each claimed to be in Colombia to monitor the peace talks (between the FARC and the Pastrana administration) and for ecotourism.[220] The men used fake passports and were unable to explain the explosive residue found in their luggage.[221] The PIRA claimed that it did not and had not sent any envoys to Colombia, whereas the Colombian military purported to know of at least fifteen

PIRA soldiers sent to the region to train with the FARC in the construction and use of IEDs.[222]

Evidence against the three Irishmen was damning. More importantly, the FARC began a bombing campaign in early 2002 that had all the markings of IEDs used by the PIRA. The attacks continued through the 2002 presidential campaign, even targeting presidential candidate Álvaro Uribe Vélez. On April 15, 2002, an IED was detonated as Uribe's armored car drove under a bridge in Barranquilla, Colombia. The car was completely destroyed, several people nearby were injured, and three people were killed.[223]

In some ways, the increased violence in urban areas backfired on the FARC. These attacks, and the relationship with the PIRA, suggested that the Pastrana peace process was a farce. Uribe's defiant response reflected that of the Colombian people, which was borne out in his subsequent election. At the same time, the PIRA's presence was another factor in the United States deciding to support Colombian efforts against the FARC as part of the war on terrorism. The US House International Relations Committee was discussing this support when the attack occurred. A few days later, US Representative Henry Hyde said, "There has . . . been a quantum leap in the FARC's terrorist proficiency on the ground and in urban warfare, which the Colombian authorities believe is attributable to IRA [*sic*] training."[224] Following another round of violence in August—the week of the Uribe inauguration—General Luis Camilo Osorio proclaimed, "The techniques that the FARC has developed in recent years show that it has had technical assistance and used technology similar to that used by the IRA [*sic*]."[225]

Europe

To counterweight US influence in Colombia, the FARC sought to cultivate a relationship with Europe.[226] The FARC valued international recognition as the primary armed group in Colombia, as it would increase the group's legitimacy both domestically as well as internationally. Since the mid-1990s, the FARC proposed the European involvement was necessary for "any sort of political legitimacy to be established."[227] For example, the FARC insisted the Europeans monitor and validate the elections in September 1997. This reliance on Europe continued into the next century when FARC representatives toured Europe to learn about "European political economy as models for Colombia."[228] This trip garnered legitimacy for the guerrilla group as it suggested that the FARC's power was comparable to that of the Colombian government. The European Parliament seemed to be persuaded by this image as it criticized the American assistance to Colombia in 2001 under Plan

Colombia. The FARC capitalized on this new relationship and stated that the organization would consult with the European community in future peace talks. However, given the erratic, violent behavior of the FARC, Europe wished to end ties with the organization after a series of kidnappings in 2001.

FINANCES, LOGISTICS, SUSTAINMENT, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Criminal Activity

Since its inception, the FARC has survived in part by obtaining funds through extortion, kidnapping/hostage-taking, and stealing supplies.[229,230] At first, it filled the coffers through typical organized criminal tactics such as extortion. The FARC was infamous for hostage-taking and kidnapping, perhaps even more than its narcotrafficking. Hostages were initially local businessmen and wealthy landowners, but the FARC began to target government officials, policemen, and soldiers. The FARC's most notorious hostages were Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and American contractors Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Tom Howes. The three Americans supported Plan Colombia by collecting intelligence on the FARC's coca production from an aerial platform. On February 13, 2003, their plane went down in the Colombian jungle, literally right on top of a FARC patrol.[231] They ended up spending more than five years in the Colombian jungle as prisoners of the FARC. At various points in the conflict, hundreds of Colombians have been incarcerated by the FARC, many of them for years, and thousands are held by the country's various armed groups.

Once it had its prisoner in captivity, the FARC would make its demands. Sometimes it was for money, other times for a prisoner exchange, but it was always intended to draw attention to the FARC's cause, gain political advantage, and create a lasting impact on the Colombian people.[232] The negotiations usually included an intermediary, like the International Red Cross, and developed a sophisticated protocol—a cultural phenomenon—where the FARC used the opportunity to cover multiple issues in a message that was repeated over and over, allowing the FARC to shift from one subject to another for its advantage and to emphasize its narrative.[233]

A radio program was established in which family members broadcast messages to their family members living in captivity. Ingrid Betancourt's mother broadcasted regularly, and the FARC usually allowed the hostages to hear the messages. At the same time, hostage-taking became an issue that eroded the FARC's popularity as family members,

such as Betancourt's husband, Juan Carlos Lecompt, and Gustavo Moncayo, father of an Army corporal in FARC hands, drew attention to the fate of their family members. Lecompt traveled the country, dropping leaflets and calling for his wife's release.[234] Moncayo met with the FARC after his son's capture, but the FARC would not release him. He also chained himself to the national palace to draw attention to his cause but received no government assistance to free his son. Finally, Moncayo walked through most of Colombia bearing a cross and chains to call attention to his son's suffering.[235]

Although extortion and kidnapping sustained the FARC for many years, growing the "little guerrilla army" required a corresponding growth in funding.[236] During the 1982 Seventh Guerilla Conference, the FARC developed a plan to leverage four commodities on the black market: livestock, commercial agriculture, oil, and gold.[237] When these revenues proved insufficient, the FARC reluctantly became involved in the narcotics trade. Initially, both Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas were opposed to drug trafficking for ideological reasons. In the long run, however, pragmatism prevailed. The illicit money and goods flowing through areas that the FARC controlled was just too rich a resource to bypass. However, the FARC's involvement in the drug trade began in a piecemeal fashion, beginning with the taxation of narcotraffickers while protecting the peasant farmers that grew the coca.[238]

The increasing presence of paramilitaries in FARC areas at this time compelled the FARC to expand its criminal operations. This was especially true of kidnappings and extortion, which increased almost five times in only three years from only $15.5 million in 1991 up to $72.6 million in 1994. Another marked increase in FARC income was from the mining of gold and coal, which doubled revenue from the roughly constant $12 million per year from 1991 to 1993 to $24.2 million in 1994. However, some of the group's methods of sustainment remained relatively stable during this time, with protection taxes, war taxes, and other sorts of financing bringing in around $40 million per year.[239]

The estimates of FARC financing through narcotics run from at least $30 million annually to as high as $1.5 billion.[240] In fact, the FARC became so sophisticated that it developed standard costs for the drug trade that in October 1999 equated to $15.70/kilo for cocaine paste, $5,263 to protect a laboratory, and $52.60 to protect a hectare of coca.[241] At one point, the FARC was responsible for exporting fifty percent of the cocaine consumed worldwide.[242] However, revenues from drug trafficking likely represent only half of the group's annual revenues. The Colombian government suggests the rest came from the FARC's classic funding lines of kidnapping, robbery, and extortion.[243] In 1998, when the narcotics trade was at $551 million, extortion and kidnapping

amounted to $311 and $236 million, respectively.[244] By 2003, drugs provided the FARC with close to "48 percent of FARC's budget—or approximately $200 million to $300 million annually."[245] Outside of this lucrative business, the FARC brought in "37 percent from extortion, 9 percent from kidnappings, and 6 percent from cattle theft."[246]

Some analyst argue that the FARC would not have become such an important player in Colombian politics without the massive funding it received from drug trafficking. It is unlikely that the FARC could have mobilized to this extent while relying on mass mobilization:

> FARC, in other words, did not become a serious factor due to mobilization of an alienated mass base. Rather it became a serious factor due to the power which came from drugs grown by a marginalized population. In terms of national percentage, these marginalized actors would not be major players. They became so only because of their role as the base upon which drug cultivation and—thus insurgent finances—was built.[247]

This conclusion recognizes that the value of the FARC's involvement in narcotics stemmed not only from the funding derived from narcotics. The FARC's drug enterprise connected the group to a large part of the Colombian population. The portion of the population involved in the drug trade alongside the FARC more closely resembled symbiotic partners than victims. The FARC tried to capitalize on this theme and emphasized its protection of peasants over narcotics. A FARC commander, Fabian Ramirez, explained:

> Because the peasants do not have an Army, they are unarmed. If [the Colombian government] want to use force to fight the drugs they should use it in Bogotá, in Cali, Medellín, or Barranquilla, because that is where the drug traffickers are . . . where they have their armies.[248]

Not surprisingly, with the drugs came money and corruption. Some of the FARC in coca-rich areas began to live as drug lords, replete with gold jewelry, fancy cars, and other luxuries. This created dissent in the ranks as FARC members who remained ascetic guerrillas recognized others living large as gangsters.

Like the problem of decentralized control through the self-defense groups of the 1970s, the FARC's structure made it difficult to control members who were becoming more drug lord than insurgent. To solve this problem, FARC leadership created the National Financial Commission. Responsible for allocation of all FARC funds, including major purchases, the commission reported directly to the EMC. A system was

developed wherein all FARC units were given a funding line and direction on how to use it. When these measures did not completely solve the corruption issue, the EMC assigned *ayudantías* or "advisors" to monitor what was happening at every level and provide advice to local leaders from time to time. If they suspected any foul play, the *ayudantías* would call for an investigation.[249] Theft or even misappropriation of FARC funding was punishable by death.[250]

Sustainment Outside Criminal Activities

Outside of kidnappings, extortion, and the drug trade, the FARC implemented and collected protection taxes similar to those the state would collect. The FARC would use these taxes not only to fund its activities, but also to provide public works and services for its followers. It derived this funding from multinational companies, national companies, and public enterprises as well as state resources meant for municipalities.[251] Through the FARC's Law 2, the organization was successful in collecting "tributes" from corporations operating in the areas the FARC controlled.[252]

Logistics

The movement of narcotics not only provided the FARC with the funding needed to sustain its various armed units, but also established logistical pathways for smuggling weapons and other material to the guerrillas. Arms were brought into Colombia from El Salvador and Nicaragua and from and through Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Much of the material came in through footpaths camouflaged within the jungle.[253] Some of the weaponry was left over from civil wars and insurgencies in other parts of Latin America; some of it was provided by Venezuela. At times, weapons were obtained from Eastern Europe and Russia. Ten thousand AK-47 assault rifles were sent from Jordan, officially bound for Peru, but air-dropped into Colombia for the FARC.[254]

Communications

The FARC robust counterintelligence capabilities, which rely on effective deception and disciplined communication, have aided the group's survival. Knowing that its communications may be intercepted, from time to time the FARC sent false messages to confuse anyone who may be listening. As a result, none of its signals could be trusted. Prisoner movements and the units that handled the hostages operated in strict radio silence to reduce the chance of rescue missions.[255] FARC

leadership also avoided talking on radios or cell phones. Instead, they used intermediaries coupled with shifting communications to different frequencies.[256] The former practice was used against the FARC as part of the Colombian Army's rescue of Betancourt and the three American contractors. In this operation, Colombian intelligence was able to mimic the voice of one of the intermediaries. She then told the communicator for the cell that had the prisoners to deliver them at a certain place and time—right into the hands of the Colombian Army.[257]

Until the 1990s, FARC communications consisted of radios and frequent organizational meetings between the regional blocs. In 1989, the FARC planned to build a mobile strategic unit which included "6 small airplanes, 2 ships, 10 speed boats, and a radio station and the construction of 4 airports, and 480 communication radios."[258] The FARC frequently used clandestine radio stations to send its message to rural areas; however, the Colombian army has intercepted and dismantled many of these radio stations.[259] By the 1990s, the FARC had enough resources to invest in the "communication equipment available," including VHF radios that were implemented at the company level.[260] The FARC eventually added satellite telephones, the Internet, messengers, and cell phones as they became available, gained through raids against Colombian security forces. By the late 2000s, the FARC embraced the social media revolution and created Facebook and Twitter accounts and blogs to communicate with its followers and to release hostage information to the public.[261]

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CHAPTER 7.

EJÉRCITO DE LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL (ELN)

TIMELINE

1849	Conservative and Liberal Parties are founded.
1899–1903	"The War of the Thousand Days"—120,000 people die in civil war between Liberals and Conservatives.
1946 (–1965)	La Violencia ("The Violence"), a localized civil war characterized by widespread violence between Liberal and Conservatives in the countryside. The conflict resulted in the deaths of 180,000–300,000 Colombians.
April 9, 1948	Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala is assassinated in Bogotá. The assassin is killed on the spot and the Bogotazo riot ensues.
1949	Conservative Party candidate Laureano Gómez Castro wins the presidential election. Colombian Communist Party introduces "mass self-defense" as means for peasants to protect themselves from armed Conservatives.
June 1, 1953	President Gomez is deposed by a military coup. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla becomes the new president of Colombia.
May 1, 1957	President Rojas resigns under the pressure of Liberals and Conservatives united under a combined political entity called the "National Front."
1958	Conservatives and Liberals agree to form the National Front, a power-sharing agreement, in a bid to end civil war.
August 7, 1958	The first National Front president, Alberto Lleras Carmago, takes office.
August 1962	President Leon Valencia Munoz is inaugurated.
1963	ELN founders Fabio Vasquez Castaño and Victor Medina Moron travel to Cuba to study guerrilla warfare with Fidel and Raúl Castro and other members of the Cuban Revolution.
January 5, 1965	In its first armed action, ELN overtakes the town of Simacota. Many regard this seminal event as the founding of the group.
1966	Camilo Torres, a nationally known left-wing priest and recent ELN recruit, dies in firefight with the Colombian army.
1970	National People's alliance is formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.

1978	ELN reaches record low numbers (perhaps thirty armed supporters). ELN reorients its overarching plan to gain control of resource-rich areas of Colombia in order to gain strategic advantage and economic independence.
1978	President Turbay begins intense fight against drug traffickers.
August 1982	President Belisario Betancur Cuartas is inaugurated. During his inaugural speech, he announces that the Colombian government will engage in peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas.
November 18, 1982	President Betancur signs Congressional Law 35, granting general amnesty to all guerrilla combatants.
May 28, 1984	Cease-fire begins under the Aribe Agreement.
August 1990	President César Gaviria Trujillo is inaugurated.
1993	Pablo Escobar is killed.
August 1994	President Ernesto Samper Pizano is inaugurated.
August 1998	President Andres Pastrana Arango is inaugurated.
December 18, 1998	ELN commits its most deadly attack—after targeting an oil pipeline, the ensuing oil spill caught fire, resulting in the deaths of forty-eight villagers.
2000	US Congress appropriates 1.3 billion dollars for Plan Colombia. Total appropriation through 2005 would reach 4.5 billion dollars.
January 17, 2000	ELN successfully bombs more than twenty power lines and towers, causing millions of Medellín residents to lose power.
August 2002	President Alvaro Uribe Vélez is inaugurated.
2004	Plan Patriota is introduced by Uribe, with the aim of establishing a permanent military presence in rebel-held territory.
December 2005	Exploratory peace talks with ELN begin in Cuba.
February 2006	US and Colombia reach a free trade deal (eventually passed in 2011).
August 2007	ELN Havana dialogues end without agreement and "two different conceptions of peace and how to get to it."
March 1, 2008	Raúl Reyes is killed in his stronghold in Ecuador during a Colombian cross-border attack.

ORIGINS OF THE ELN

Figure 7-1. ELN flag.

In the early 1960s, a group of students in Colombia, inspired by the revolution in Cuba, founded an armed group committed to bringing revolution to their country. These students, led by Fabio Vásquez Castaño, sought military training in Cuba before returning to Colombia to establish their own army of national liberation, dedicated to replicating what they had witnessed abroad. Accounts vary as to the actual beginning of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or the ELN, but most agree that the group coalesced in 1964, with their first combat operation occurring in Simacota on January 7, 1965, which is often cited as the date of foundation.

The primary motivation for engaging in armed insurrection against the Colombian government was the success of the Cuban Revolution. Fabio Vásquez adopted the *foquismo,* or foco theory,[a] which was inspired and perpetuated by Guevara. In the late 1950s, Guevara, together with Fidel and Raúl Castro, used the foco model of warfare to achieve revolution in Cuba. After attempting to legally overthrow the corrupt government of Fulgencio Batista through the judicial process in 1952, Fidel Castro decided that an armed revolution was the only means to victory. An initial failed attempt landed the Castro brothers in prison; after significant pressure was applied to the Batista regime to release all political prisoners, they were freed in 1955. Shortly after being released from prison, they fled to Mexico. There they met with other exiles, and they

[a] "The foco is basically made up at first, of some 25 to 35 men under the politico-military leadership of a man in charge of the whole operation. The foco has supporters and sympathizers in the city, but will not receive orders from any organized group or party stationed in the urban centers. It operates as the vanguard of a popular army. The foco will establish close relations with the peasants of the area in which it operates, but at no time will it sacrifice the mobility and safety of the guerrilla band for the sake of village or territory."

planned to overthrow the Batista regime. In June of 1955, the Castro brothers met Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentinian revolutionary, and Guevara joined the brothers in their call for a Cuban revolution.

The Castro brothers, Guevara, and less than a hundred other guerrillas returned to Cuba on December 2, 1956. By the first of January 1959, Batista was ousted and his regime was replaced by the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro. The Batista regime, whose armed forces numbered more than 30,000, was defeated by the revolutionaries who adhered to the foco model. Small, focused groups of armed guerrillas, with support from local populations, conducted small, strategic attacks on the Batista regime, eventually defeating the army and police force while suffering few casualties. Small groups of armed revolutionaries dispersed dissent throughout the countryside. The strategy the small groups employed emphasized targeting specific areas of the government infrastructure, with the goal of destabilization[1,2]

Had the revolution in Cuba not been successful, it is doubtful that the ELN would have formed in the manner it did. However, it is significant that, in the era after La Violencia, the political climate was one of severe distress and upheaval, and many protest movements launched at that time. One social scientist characterizes two intertwining motifs of Colombian history: "(1) social relations marked by inequality, exploitation, and exclusion and (2) violence employed by those with economic and political power over the working majority and the poor in order to acquire control over resources, forcibly recruit labor, and suppress or eliminate dissent."[3] It is within this context that the ELN began its revolution in earnest.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, COMMAND AND CONTROL, AND LEADERSHIP

Organizational Structure and Command and Control

The ELN's fragmented structure has directly evolved from its foco foundations. The small, easily mobile guerrilla bands are dispersed throughout Colombia. These groups integrate themselves into the local communities and foment support for the insurgency. The ELN's small guerilla bands span at least twenty-three departments and an area from Narino in the extreme south, La Guajira in the north, Aurca in the east, and Choco on the Pacific coast.[4] These nuclei comprise the multiple guerilla fronts, or *frentes*.[5]

A central command (COCE), comprising five commanders, oversees the organization, providing a framework of "federalism and consensual democracy."[6] The COCE's military commander is also the commander

of the entire organization. Another COCE commander oversees political functions; a third is responsible for international affairs; a fourth manages the group's finances; and the fifth commander is charged with communications with the fronts.[7] Below the COCE is the National Directorate (Dirección Nacional), with twenty-three members.

All political and military decisions are made by the COCE, but commanders of the ELN's fronts have more autonomy than their counterparts in the FARC. Control is typically regional, and commanders often use different tactics to achieve their goals. For example, the Domingo Laín Front is said to be the most radical, and the wealthiest, of the war fronts.[8]

In practice, this structure does not provide for strict oversight. In addition, this structure hinders the possibility of a cease-fire, as the rural, semiautonomous bands rarely interact because they are disbursed throughout the country. The ELN's wide dispersal complicates verification and force protection as most of the nuclei tend to stay in their respective regions during cease-fires.[9]

The ELN holds a session of Congress, approximately every decade.[10] At these Congress sessions, the leadership makes broad, policy-decisions for the organization. For example, at the Congress session in 1996, the leadership emphasized its commitment to ideological pursuits rather than financial advancement through the drug trade.[11]

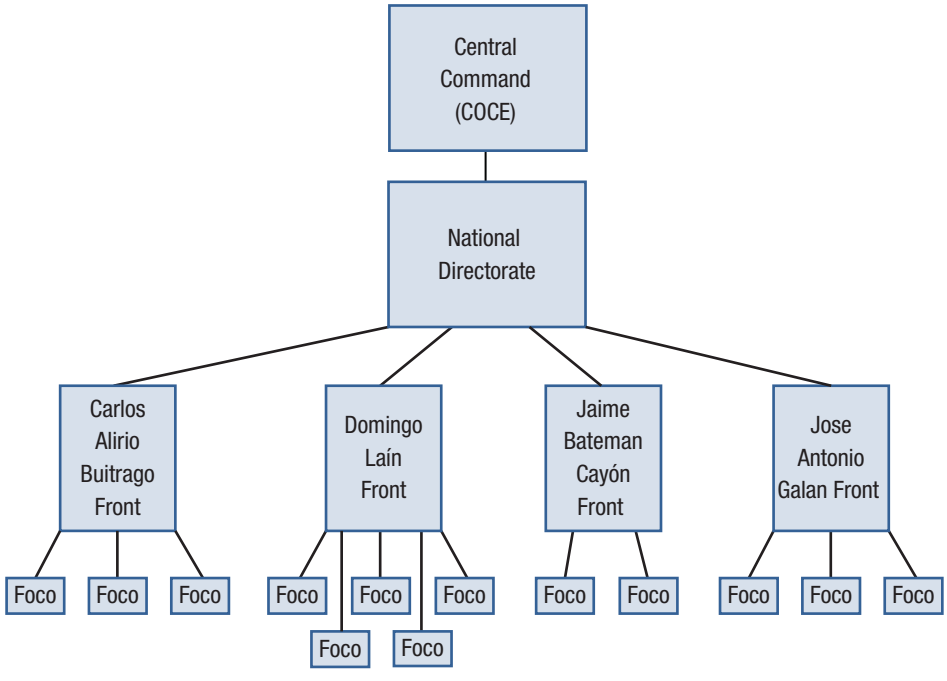

Figure 7-2. Notional ELN organizational structure.

Fabio Vásquez and Victor Medina were captivated by the success of the Cuban Revolution. Together, they established the ELN, mimicking the methods used in Cuba, with the same goal of government takeover. As in Cuba, the insurgency began in the rural mountainside. The rural community of San Vicente de Chucuri in the Magdalena Valley in the Santander Department was specifically selected to serve as the home of the new insurgency. The home of the "guerrilla foco incubation" required "rugged geography that allowed clandestine mobilization" along with traditions of rebellions, peasant struggles, and a familiarity of violence and dissent.[12] Santander's Magdalena valley had the requisite terrain and proximity to "several villages with peasants with former guerrilla experience that included cooperation with Liberal guerrilla groups," thus possessing an ideological affinity.[13]

Vásquez ingratiated himself into the community, over the course of many months, working alongside the peasant farm laborers. He reminded the workers of the first peasant to rebel against the Spanish, José Antonio Galan, who had been born in Santander and was hanged for his insurrection. Vásquez also brought up the struggles of the local unions that had for more than forty years fought for equitable pay from the foreign corporations that were extracting Santander's local resources.[14] The local workers, over time, adopted Vásquez's vision that change could be possible. A few dozen villagers set up camp in the jungle, led by Vásquez, to begin training in preparation for their first activist demonstration.

The groups' first combat operation was the assault on Simacota, Santander on January 7, 1965. Fewer than thirty guerrillas opened fire, killing two policemen, and distributed their manifesto.[b] The assault was considered a success and garnered a great deal of publicity.

Within days, Vásquez received word from the left-wing priest Camilo Torres. Torres had requested a meeting and expressed interest in joining the ELN. Vásquez ordered men to begin observing Torres to determine whether his behavior and public and private engagements would indicate whether he was prepared to join an armed insurgency. After seven months of observation, Vásquez issued Torres an invitation to join the ELN. After a clandestine journey from safe house to safe house, Torres arrived at the ELN jungle headquarters, where he immediately was introduced to the guerrilla life.

After Torres perished in a firefight in 1966, the ELN struggled to maintain its cohesive structure. Deep discord between urban and rural guerrillas and continual infighting led to the loss of members. At one point, the armed component of the ELN dropped to as low

[b] See *Appendix A. ELN Manifestos* for a copy of the manifesto.

as thirty guerrillas. Slowly, the organization grew, emphasizing armed control over areas rich in natural resources.[15] The 1990s were a period of rebuilding for the ELN, and this rebuilding extended into the twenty-first century. Three goals were explicitly set for the insurgency:

> The first was to expand its finances as well as the capacity of its military troops in order to achieve the status of a major political actor among Colombia's potent assortment of belligerents.
>
> Second, . . . the ELN has been nothing short of desperate for a piece of territory under its own control. Indeed at the turn of the century, this became the group's most enunciated objective.
>
> Finally, the rebels have been attempting to influence a restructuring of the Colombian political economy consistent with their ideological premises.[16]

The desire for a *zona de despeje*, a territory fully under ELN control, has been the single driving focus of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. All peace talks since the late 1990s have centered on such a cease-fire zone over which it would have primary political control.[17]

The foco model lent itself well to the new emphasis on strategic regional control. Small, semi-autonomous, rural-based guerrilla groups moved easily through the jungle to specific targets. Rural, jungle mountainous areas have less security, less infrastructure, and fewer opportunities for interactions with police than urban areas.

The founding foco theory was carried throughout the organization. Groups of rural guerrillas were placed on the rural front and in urban centers. Since the late 1970s, however, the uniformity of the armed foco has dwindled. The part-time and amateur nature of the ELN's recent armed component is in stark contrast to the full-time and professional armies of the FARC and AUC.[18] Additionally, the ENL "has been more adept at committing spectacular crime and terrorism than at direct military combat."[19]

The armed component of the ELN has been based primarily in the rural jungle, comprised of majority rural guerrillas, with urban guerrillas joining less frequently. A raid in late 2012 revealed a massive guerrilla camp in the southwestern province of Nariño, home to possibly 200 guerrillas. While this discovery revealed the ease with which the ELN moved about Nariño, it is very unusual for the insurgency to have such a large base of operations.[20]

An internal crisis of infighting brought the numbers of ELN guerrillas and supporters to a historic low. By 1978, the ELN was nearly

annihilated. It could marshal only about thirty armed supporters.[21] A resurgence was fueled by a return to the ideologies of its beginning:

> The group started also to "plan how to bring about consciousness during agitation. It was the epoch of writing handbooks, talks, envisioning with the masses what could be created . . . We even started to make extraordinary things, like completing sociological research in areas, characterizing local communities, their problems, contradictions. . . ."[22]

Many acts of spectacular crime and terrorism have occurred since this time of rebuilding, and while this reemergence has waned since the beginning of the twenty-first century, estimates of the size of the armed guerrilla component hovers at a few thousand.[23] Since 2000, the ELN has increased its involvement in the drug trade, particularly the trade crossing the porous Ecuadorean and Venezuelan borders.[24]

Leadership

The most important component of Fabio Vásquez's leadership was his legacy. Camilo Torres and Vásquez both serve as mythologized figures. Vásquez demanded unfailing commitment, creating something of a cult of personality. Torres inspires a commitment of another kind; the priest-martyr has inspired the loyalty of many young guerillas.

Today, the leadership of the ELN is in the hands of Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, who was recruited to the ELN as a young man early in the insurgency. Bautista was central to the ELN's resurgence and has maintained its viability into the twenty-first century.

Fabio Vásquez Castaño

Fabio Vásquez Castaño left Cuba for Colombia in 1963, with the explicit intention of organizing a foco-based guerrilla insurgency. While the oligarchic structure of Colombian politics left no inroads for dissent, the corrupt partisan violence that had characterized Colombian society and squelched upward mobility for the majority of Colombians came to a head in the early 1960s, with the formation of many rebellions, each with their own particular flavor of dissent. The left-wing ideology of Cuban's Communist revolution appealed greatly to young Vásquez, who had witnessed first-hand the senseless killings and displacement characteristic of La Violencia. His father, who had owned an ordinary coffee farm and had been a leader in Liberal politics, was killed by a Conservative faction, and his family was forced to flee their homeland of Quindío.[25] Vásquez went on to become a respected

schoolteacher and community leader. He was active in unions and kept close contacts with students, teachers, Communist leaders, and left-wing intellectual and political leadership in both Bogotá and Bucaramanga (the capital city of the Santander Department).

Vásquez had already become something of a notable leader in the left-wing movement before he formed the ELN. Additionally, his brothers, Manuel and Antonio (with whom Fabio maintained close contact), had become "intellectual and political leaders of the student movement in Bogotá at Universidad Nacional de Colombia."[26] Fabio naturally implemented a tenet of the foco ideology—to spread dissent in rural communities. Tall, charismatic, handsome, and inclined to "go and work with the peasants on the fields," Fabio easily ingratiated himself into the rural area of San Vicente de Chucuri.[27]

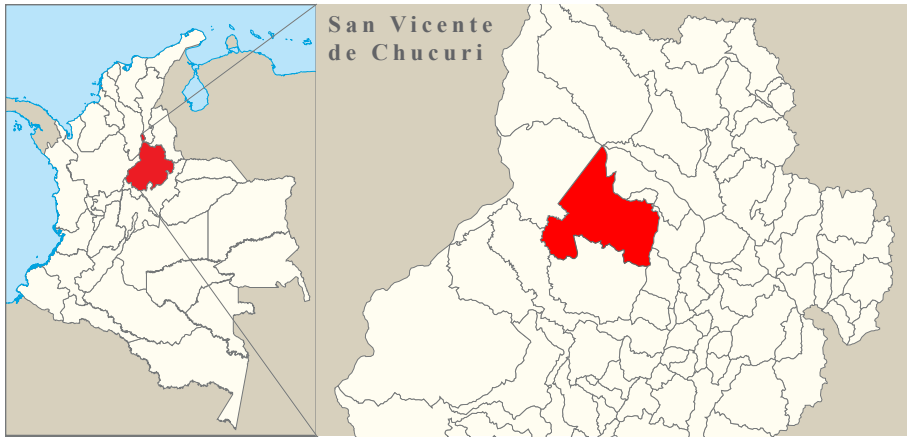

Figure 7-3. Map of San Vicente de Chucuri.

Victor Medina Moron

Victor Medina Moron, an urban intellectual, traveled with Vásquez to Cuba and was also selected to participate in the strenuous training Fabio received.[28] Fabio appointed Medina to the number two position in the ELN. The appointment fostered deep discontent and division between rural and urban guerrillas. Most viewed Medina as a privileged rural elite, while the urban guerrillas came to resent his leadership.

Camilo Torres

Figure 7-4. Plaque commemorating Camilo Torres.

Camilo Torres was not a founding member of the ELN, though he is often attributed with that distinction. Born in 1929 to a bourgeois Bogotá family, Torres eventually became a proponent of liberation theology, which was a component of the ideological legacy he left to the ELN. A girlfriend of his during his youth introduced Torres to some visiting Dominican priests, and they eventually became regular attenders at the Dominican's lecture cycles.[29] Before this introduction, Torres's religious education had been nominal, at best, even for such a deeply Catholic society. He eventually entered the priesthood.

The presence of slums within sight of the seminary yard, and the distinct separation between the priests and those in the slums, deeply impacted Torres. His concern for the evident disparity between the cloistered clergy and the poor laid a foundation for his future work in improving living conditions for all Colombians. For the entirety of his priestly career, he sought to bridge the separation between the church and the people. His studies took him abroad to Louvain, Belgium, where he established social study circles at universities he visited. He was extremely charismatic and well liked. As he traveled on breaks from school, he eventually spent considerable time in Berlin, where he was first introduced to the Communist student movement. Additionally, at that time, he encountered student workers in Paris, serving communities of slum dwellers.

After returning to Colombia in January of 1959, Torres accepted a position as a sociology professor and university chaplain at Bogotá's

National University. Torres's courses took place both at the university and in Bogotá's slums, developing courses on issues such as urbanization, living standards, land reform, political violence, education, democracy, and sociology. Eventually, he established training courses for peasants in the countryside.[30] He was continually refining and seeking better, more effective ways to effect the change he could see was necessary for those not part of the ruling elite. These efforts helped him realize that the peasants, slum dwellers, professional people, and others needed to be linked together to pressure for change.[31] This united front would capture and focus the energy of massive student protests, the unionist's momentum, the peasants cries for land reform, all of which was fomenting in the early 1960s.

The united front was the culmination of Torres's theological evolution. He witnessed the oligarchic stronghold on resources, access, and power and believed a fundamental change was necessary—revolution. His eventual defrocking due to his political activism did not impact his reputation, and his popularity continued to grow throughout Colombia as he shared his message, "In language that echoed the gospels Torres said that revolution was 'the way to bring about a government that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, teaches the ignorant, puts into practice the works of charity, and love for neighbor, not just every now and then, and not just for a few, but for the majority of our neighbors.' "[32,c]

In the days after the ELN's initial public appearance—the assault on Simacota—Torres was captivated by the group. After reading the manifesto, published in newspapers around the country, he began to make inquiries as to how to connect with these revolutionaries. Eventually, word reached Fabio Vásquez, who spread the word for the priest to be monitored. After Torres proved himself, the ELN leadership invited him to join the resistance movement. Unfortunately for the ELN, Torres was killed in his first combat experience in Santander Department in 1966. Subsequently, he became a martyr for the movement.

Manuel Pérez

A Spanish-born priest, Manuel Pérez was deeply inspired by Camilo Torres's commitment to the ELN and the call to revolution. He was one of the few remaining members after internal conflicts tore apart the ELN in the late 1960s into the early 1970s. In 1973, Pérez stepped into leadership of the ELN, a position he held until his death in 1998, alongside Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista.

[c] See *Appendix A. ELN Manifestos* for Torres's entire manifesto.

Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista

A peasant recruit in 1964, Nicolás Bautista (also known as Gambino) is one of the longest-standing members of the ELN, even participating in the ELN's first military exercise. Bautista is the current leader of the ELN. After proving himself, the ELN leadership invited Torres to join the resistance movement. Unfortunately for the ELN, Torres was killed in his first combat experience in Santander Department in 1966. Subsequently, he became a martyr for the movement.

Corriente de Renovación Socialista

The Corriente de Renovación Socialista, or CRS, was a splinter faction of the ELN. The CRS demobilized and disarmed in the mid-1990s after signing a peace accord with the Colombian government.[33] Marxist intellectuals started the political group, which was initially called Movimiento de Integración Revolucionaria (MIR). The MIR joined the ELN after a few years of existence as an independent guerrilla movement. A few years after joining the ELN, the MIR severed ties to the larger organization because of differing political and military viewpoints. After separating from the ELN, the MIR formed the CRS, and the group was ultimately reintegrated into civilian society in the mid-1990s.[34]

COMPONENTS OF THE INSURGENCY

Underground and Auxiliary

The division between rural and urban guerrillas highlighted the socioeconomic differences between these groups. Urban sympathizers within the ELN tended to be more educated. The moral tenets and general sophistication of the ELN's ideology had cultivated support for the group among middle-class students and professionals.[35] Auxiliary support tended to be based in urban settings, tasked with fomenting protests and gathering information. The ELN's auxiliary support in rural settings was typically less distinguishable from that of the rural underground. The underground and the auxiliary provided similar support to the ELN.

However loosely the ELN may be structured today, the early decades saw stricter adherence to the focused, tight guerrilla units. The underground component of the ELN has played an important role in recruitment and support of guerrillas on both the rural and urban fronts. Fabio Vásquez initially chose to plant the roots of the ELN in the peasant community of San Vicente de Chucuri, in the jungles of Santander Department, which was historically sympathetic to the cause of revolution. Supplies for the early members of the ELN were stored at the

home of the future ELN leader, Nicolás Rodrigues Bautista. Bautista was enthralled by the charismatic Vásquez and observed the deference and respect given to Vásquez by the community. Bautista's parents were early supporters. His mother stitched the uniforms for the first guerrillas. When Bautista contemplated officially joining Vásquez and his guerrillas, his father spoke plainly:

> Listen. If you decide to struggle, you must be faithful until the death. Victory is not just turning the corner. If you decide to struggle, that becomes your life. It is not like in a movie, it won't be easy. In this struggle there are not heroes that come, fight, vanquish and then return home . . . This struggle is for the rest of your life.[36]

This early underground perpetuated the importance of the values of the ELN, specifically its founder. Vásquez viewed the revolution in the context of a long line of honorable struggles, and loyalty was central to his vision of the foco army. Considering the advice of Bautista's father, "it is clear that the decision was taken in a wider context of sociability in which his decisions were conditioned by a larger historical narrative."[37] Additionally, the early underground established the patterns followed throughout the history of the ELN. The peasantry offered the primary hideout for the ELN after major operations or during attacks by security forces.[38]

The family of a guerrilla member commonly acted as a component of the underground. As one former guerrilla describes, his mother "met my friends and knew about my activities. She helped me a lot in my work . . . My siblings also helped me. They had a lot of information about my situation but they never joined the organization."[39] Familial integration is commonly an indicator of future participation:

> You ended up introducing other members of the guerrilla movement to nephews, nieces, and children . . . So everybody felt integrated into the community, into a [political] project. The children didn't care, but little by little they were introduced to it.[40]

The urban underground and auxiliary was a source of intelligence for the ELN. In the case of recruiting Camilo Torres, Vásquez relied on the informal networks that guerrillas established in Bogotá to observe and assess the priest.[41] The primarily urban auxiliary provided support, gathered intelligence, and served as community organizers. One guerrilla describes organizing political protests, "mobilizing the masses."[42] Urban guerrillas had to take care to blend in with neighbors while

still following orders from commanders. Safe houses were common in urban communities, and great care was taken to not attract attention.[43]

Urban members tended to be more educated and were attracted to the ELN because of its ideological roots. A guerrilla recalls discovering ELN text as a student protester; "There were also a lot of events in grassroots organizations. Once I attended an event at a place that had a good library, so I began borrowing books . . . I thought those documents were from the MIR [a legal left-wing movement]. Later, I was told that they were from the ELN. This was how I made my first contacts with the guerrilla organization."[44] Other guerrillas have memories of "reading Marxist literature in the school library" before joining the ELN.[45] These *urbanos* could have transitioned into the armed component of the ELN, but to become a soldier required proving oneself to the rural guerrilla front.

The urban auxiliary has been a prominent component since the early years of the ELN. For example, Camilo Torres worked with the student leader Jaime Arenas. Unbeknownst to his circle of student revolutionaries in the 1960s, Arenas was a member of the ELN. Arenas had become a prominent leader after he led a three-month-long student strike and student marches.[46]

Armed Component

In the days of Vásquez, the life of the armed guerrillas was entrenched in ritual and hierarchy. Today, the guerrillas are less bound by the strict rules of those early days, the legalism of which contributed to the decline in numbers.

All new members of the ELN are baptized with a new guerrilla alias. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista recalls, "Everyone was given the name from that moment on, there was a list . . . [Vásquez states] 'Forget about your usual name and use now the name of war' Fabio then gave us a discourse, that we were the continuity of Bolívar and Galan's struggles. I got the goose bumps!"[47] This ritual act of baptism detached the new guerrilla from his old life and marked the beginning of a new one.

The transition into the armed guerrilla component was highly ritualized:

> The EscuelaPalito (Wooden stick training) was a mimicry of combat created by the leaders of the ELN to maintain the expectation for confrontation with the enemy whilst each guerrillero had the possibility of practicing tactical movements, without a real gun machine. The escuelapalito was established by 1967 as

> the ritual transition between a recently clandestinized guerrillero, and a fighter fully active in operations. In the training a piece of wood simulated the form of a gun machine, and the guerrillero had to learn how to clean it, hold it, and care for it as the main element for its survival in case of a combat. The piece of wood was replaced by a real gun machine after an operation where the goal was to disarm a soldier. This ritual was part of the 'baptism of fire' for guerrilleros, and was laden with symbolism and ceremonies for the transition from normal life to revolutionary belonging. Details about this ritual in Sánchez Sierra.[48]

Another ritual of the guerrilla component was to educate urban and rural guerrillas through daily courses, varying from literacy to the martyr history of the ELN, specifically regarding Torres. Those guerrillas coming from an urban background struggled to integrate into the jungle life. Victor Medina, though a guerrilla from the creation of the ELN, was not accepted by the rural guerrillas. He did not participate in the military drills or the storytelling and was perceived to be lazy and possessing "disdain" for their routines. The peasants' view of Victor Medina became a typical stereotype held by rural insurgents about their urban counterparts.[49]

The armed component swore an unbreakable vow of full compliance, "once you are in, you cannot escape the call of revolution." Such a vow was more significant than the work of the auxiliary.[50] An armed guerrilla explains, "if you compared people engaged in military activities with those involved in political propaganda, the members of the military unit developed higher levels of solidarity because they had to trust each other with their lives."[51]

Public Component

The ELN has always viewed the public component of its work with great importance. As the ELN leader Fabio told his followers, the guerrillas needed to engage in th dual actions of military blows and the "gradual winning-over of whole peasant areas."[52] To this end, after the insurgency's first military action, they distributed copies of their manifesto, and this pattern continued throughout many of their military actions. Urban guerrillas often created the propaganda materials to be distributed.[53]

Urban guerrillas produced newspapers and often wrote editorials. For example, in a typical editorial in October 1999, the ELN criticized the national government. In addition to accusing the government

of fomenting state terrorism and social inequality, the ELN called into questions the government's motivation for pursuing peace with the rebels, accusing the government of trying to wear out the rebels through negotiations.[54] The media has been an outlet for spreading their ideological paradigm, and today the ELN has a website (http://www.eln-voces.com/) where they distribute their writings, as well as a Spanish-language magazine.[55]

IDEOLOGY

The modern ELN has integrated the liberation theology of Torres's legacy with the Marxism first perpetuated by Vásquez. Additionally, the ELN has adopted a nuanced stance on neoliberalism to which they had previously been generally opposed. The stance presents "well-developed if controversial ideas regarding such issues as foreign investment and privatization." The ELN makes a clear ideological distinction between their opposition to neoliberalism and their support of foreign investment in the extractive sector of Colombia's economy.[56] While opposing the privatization of the energy sector and other strategic industries, the ELN proposes that Colombians should welcome the investment of transnational corporations to limit dependence on other countries, mainly the United States. The ELN supports the development of "human, material, scientific and technological infrastructure" as long as the masses of Colombians are integrated and the profits are not held by the oligarchy.[57]

Most importantly, the "unique interpretations of Christianity and political realism" appeals to peasants and left-wing intellectuals alike."[58] The ideology informs the broad policy-level decisions of the ELN's central command. The ELN resisted engaging in drug trafficking and chose to continue its commitment to the ideals of social justice and liberation theology. This resulted in the weakening of the group's paramilitary wing.[59]

LEGITIMACY

The greatest legitimacy that the ELN seeks is the acquisition of a cease-fire zone to obtain primary political control. In the late 1990s, the FARC was given land to control, and the ELN has sought the same ownership ever since.[60] However, the AUC has continually thwarted any gains to this end.[61]

Civic support has been critical to the sustainment of the ELN, particularly in relation to its peace-building efforts. To contrast with the

actions of the FARC, the ELN "has actively sought greater civil society input into its dialogues with the government."[62]

Additionally, the foco nature of the ELN warrants intimate connections with local communities. One rural community experienced the ELN even arranging for marriages and divorces.[63] The ELN provided for the rural communities; "[the ELN] helped the community, filled many vacuums left empty by the State . . . You might say that's how a close and affectionate relationship was formed between the communities and the guerrillas."[64]

MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

The ELN's origins lie in the Cuban Revolution. However, the ELN relied on the confluence of multiple ideologies and social groups to create a wide foundation of followers. Through their commitment to liberation theology, social justice and anti-neoliberalism, the ELN united Christians, middle-class professionals, and students—Colombians who were not represented by the Liberals or Conservatives.[65]

As stated in a previous section, the primary inspiration for the foundation of the ELN was the success of the Cuban Revolution, motivated by the possibility of overthrowing the oligarchy. Currently, the motivation behind the current actions of the ELN are twofold—the acquisition of their own cease-fire zone and the continual financial independence garnered by the pattern of kidnappings, extortion placed on corporations, and possibly the entry into the drug trade.

OPERATIONS

Paramilitary

The ELN used its paramilitary operations nearly exclusively for furthering its political agenda. The strength of the ELN lies in the political and social ideology rather than a tightly formed militaristic operation.

> The fundamental premise inherent in the ELN's strategic thinking is that 'to the disgrace of Colombian society, the governing class will only listen to the voice of dynamite and of guns.' Thus, due to the strong exclusionary tendencies that historically have blighted governing policy, the principal strategy of the ELN was to get the states attention through the clever and organized deployment of shocking and often nonmurderous spectacles. But this required substantial funding.[66]

The ELN has primarily targeted businesses, utilities, and the government, using firearms and bombs almost exclusively. The intention for the attacks was primarily hostage taking and kidnapping—correlating directly to the need for funding.

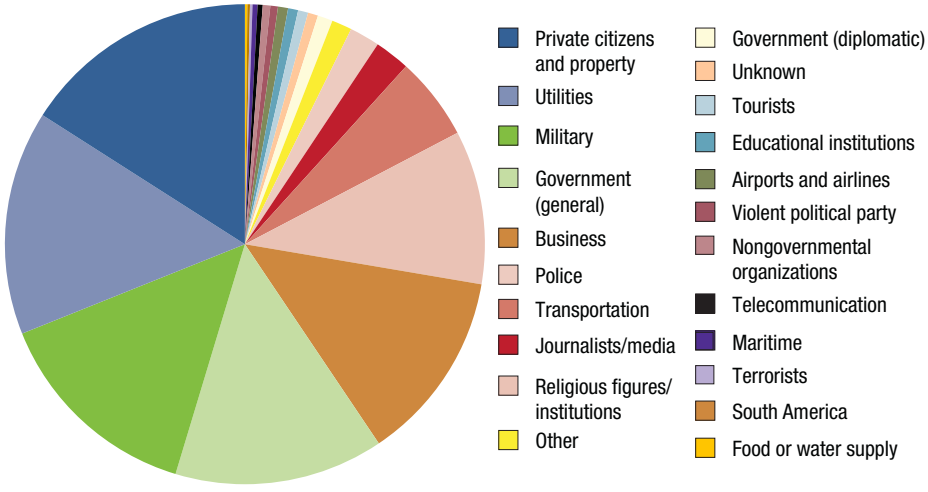

Figure 7-5. ELN target types.

The rapid increase of incidents in the early 1980s is directly tied to the ELN's time of rebuilding after almost complete annihilation in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, the leadership of the ELN refined their strategy, specifying specific regions of Colombia that held key economic resources. These regions were targeted in the early 1980s, reflected in the steep increase of attacks beginning in 1982. The late 1990s have shown a steady decrease in attacks, with the exception of 2001. Otherwise, the data demonstrates the declining power of the ELN in the twenty-first century.

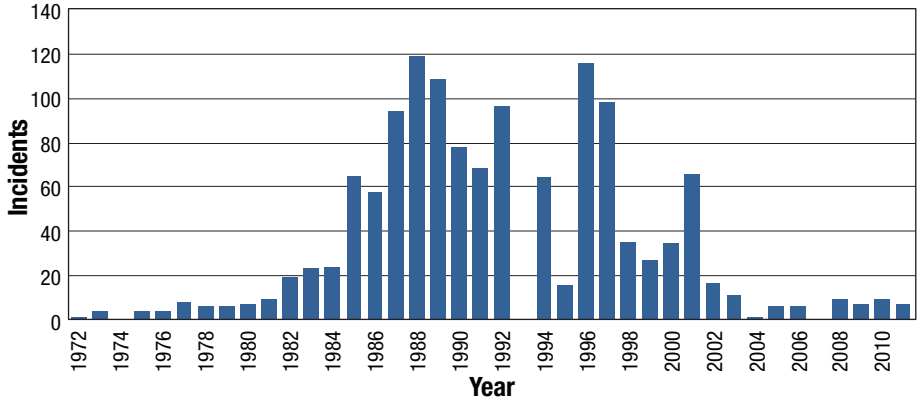

Figure 7-6. ELN incidents per year.

The ELN relied upon extortions and kidnappings to almost entirely fund their operations, comprising over half of their attacks.

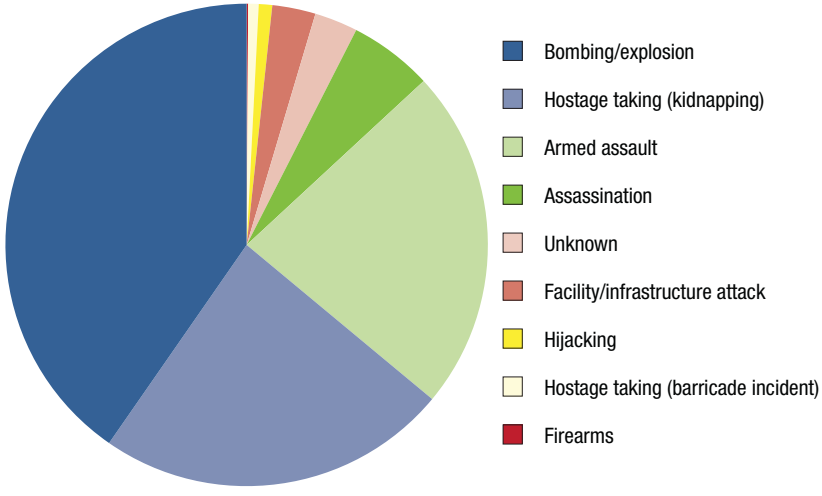

Figure 7-7. ELN attack types.

The complete shutdown of the Medellín power grid is an example of the typical action from the paramilitary. The ELN successfully bombed more than twenty power towers and power lines on January 17, 2000. The incident caused millions of Medellín residents to lose power. The motivation for this massive attack was to protest the nationalization of a power company. The ELN hoped to use the attack to pressure the government to establish a demilitarized zone for negotiations.[67]

A significant example of ELN and FARC collaboration occurred after the Colombian military bombed FARC headquarters in La Uribe. Both the FARC and the ELN "responded in kind by launching multiple attacks throughout the country."[68] This aggressive response was the beginning of a severe increase in attacks: 612 armed actions occurred in 1989 and barely 690 in 1990, but in 1991, 1,321 armed actions occurred.[69]

Other collaborative efforts included a series of deadly attacks, at least forty-two individual incidents, throughout the country on August 3 and 4, 1998. The government, oil lines and pumps, and citizens were their targets—using bombs, car bombs, and other weapons—and 275 individuals were killed.[70]

Their most deadly single attack occurred in Segovia on December 18, 1998. The ELN targeted an oil pipeline using dynamite. After oil spilled into a nearby village, a fire erupted. Forty-eight villagers were killed, and more than one hundred were injured.[71]

The massive highway Autopista Medellín-Bogotá has proven to be a lucrative and significant holding for the ELN. Throughout the 1990s,

the ELN and the FARC jockeyed for greater control, imposing roadblocks or shutting down stretches of highway entirely. The ELN would impose taxes at the roadblocks, or "engage in *pescas milagrosas*, or 'miracle fishing,' that is, random kidnappings for ransom of drivers and passengers travelling the road."[72] In February 2000, the ELN blocked the eastern section of the highway, prohibiting the flow of goods and services in and out of the towns along the roads.[73] Eight thousand locals were forced to relocate.

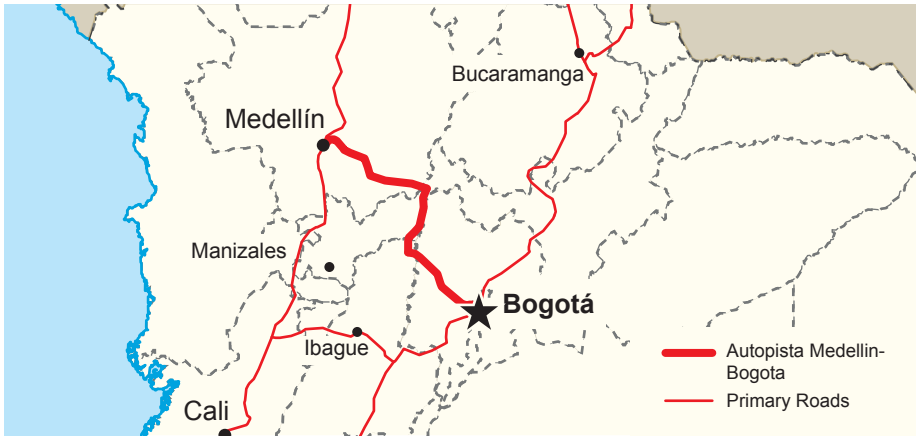

Figure 7-8. Highway Autopista Medellín-Bogotá.

In an effort to purge a Medellín neighborhood of guerrilla and criminal elements, President Uribe ordered a massive military offensive strategy at the end of 2002. In retaliation, the ELN imposed a ten-day blockade of three regions (Cocorná, San Luis, and Granada). In an effort to isolate villages and prevent inter-municipality travel and communication, the guerrillas bombed electrical towers and blew up bridges and roads.[74] The operation also prevented villagers from accessing food or medical care. Authorities eventually reached a consensus with local ELN leaders, promising to remedy social inequality in the region.

The ELN was never particularly successful against the direct attacks of the Colombian military. Their strategy has been to retreat and return to designated safe houses. Segovia is a mining village in the mountainous jungle of Antioquia. The ELN had long held Segovia as a safe haven, even after the FARC moved to the area. In fact, both insurgencies "enjoyed a sense of invulnerability in the area."[75] After a military offensive launched by the Colombian government in 1970, which nearly wiped out the ELN, the rebels said they were open to peace talks. While the ELN retreated further into the mountains to regroup, the military retreated. When no peace negotiations began, the ELN slowly reemerged to retake control of Segovia.[76]

Administrative

Frequently, recruits became of member of the ELN because of a connection already involved in either the armed component or the underground/auxiliary sectors. Bautista's experience is an instructive example of joining the ELN early in its early inception. His parents were early supporters of Fabio Vásquez, and their introduction to the insurgency was integral to his life commitment to the revolution.[77] In fact, fifty-seven percent of CRS members (ELN splinter group) claim family influence as their reason for entering the guerrilla movement.[78]

The ELN's intellectual image was perpetuated by the recruits; one hundred percent of studied CRS members cited Communist propaganda, clandestine guerrilla literature, left-wing publications, or popular literature as an influence,[79] and the majority of recruits claim their concern for social injustice or sympathy with Communist and nationalist ideologies were significant motivators for joining the guerrilla movement.[80]

Once in the movement, recruits underwent various ritualized stages of induction—a new name (baptism), wooden stick training or baptism by fire, educational courses, and a highly regimented daily schedule.[81] A guerrilla's identity could become fully immersed in the insurgency.

For many guerrillas, the insurgency overtook all other facets of their lives. Rural guerrillas especially were subject to the insurgency's total command. One guerrilla speaks; "as an individual, I depended on the organization for everything" from clothes, girlfriends, to food, housing and access to health care.[82] This dependence created a natural opportunity for guerrillas to find their identities in the insurgency.

Additionally, self-sacrifice was always integral to forming loyalty and commitment among the ranks of guerrillas. A former guerrilla provides this account:

> When you were fighting, sometimes you needed to hold off the enemy attack while other members escaped. You put your life in jeopardy for others. It happened to me many times when I was protecting the leadership of the movement. . . . In everyday life, sometimes a comrade's hammock got broken so you needed to share your hammock, despite the fact that the other person was not your friend or lover. During times when food was scarce, everybody ate equal portions. On long walks, males helped females by carrying their backpacks. And when we were fighting, we never left the wounded or dead behind. In jail everybody tries to help each other. There are many more examples.

> We lived like siblings. I loved my comrades in that way. They were my family.[83]

The following gruesome tale depicts the sacrificial demands Vásquez placed on guerrillas under his command. In a time of food rationing, one guerrilla was found to have eaten more than his share. He was condemned to death, executed by a firing squad of his own companions.[84]

While leaving an insurgent guerrilla group can be challenging, once a guerrilla has left, apparently they received no retaliation from the ELN. The ELN's strong ideology determines the targets of its attacks, yet former guerrilla members hold immunity from the ELN's paramilitary actions because they have entered into agreements with the government. The splinter group, CRS, received no retaliatory attacks once they reached a demobilization agreement.[85]

Psychological

The ELN has always emphasized the ideological battle, rather than the militaristic, violent acts that characterized the FARC or the AUC. The likely and recent engagement in the drug trade is a significant departure from the ideological commitment to political action espoused during the fourth Congress session in 2006.[86]

Political

The ELN has long relied on kidnappings and extortion as their primary sources of revenue. These acts have also held political significance. As discussed previously, the ELN struggled with achieving political legitimacy, particularly in relation to the FARC. The conjunction of multiple actions has raised the ELN's national and international profile, providing the ELN with more independent negotiating power in its search for a demilitarized zone.

Several high-profile "retentions" between 1999 and 2000 are particularly noteworthy in this regard. The ELN initiated the kidnappings not for the typical profit motive, but as public relations schemes designed to attract global media coverage. In addition to the kidnappings, the ELN adopted two other tactics to complement its media exposure strategy.[87] The first was the ELN's bombing of the Medellín power grid, causing millions to be without power.[88] Another tactic was the perpetual bombing of oil pipelines, costing the "Colombian government and private businesses $32 billion between 1998 and October 2000."[89] These tactics avoided the indiscriminate violence used by other insurgencies and

eventually influenced the state to engage in dialogue with the ELN.[90] Lastly, in an effort to further the plan to declare a peace zone in Sonson, the ELN kidnapped the mayor in 2001, which is one example of the politically motivated kidnappings for which the ELN is known.[91]

The ELN leadership has vocally criticized insurgencies for setting aside their weapons and becoming legitimate actors in the political process. For example, M-19 is a former left-wing insurgent group that ceased violent action in exchange for political legitimacy as a recognized political party. Manuel Pérez Martínez has publicly criticized the abandonment of arms, stating: "They not only lost their weapons . . . they lost their ideals . . . We find no difference between the political practices of traditional parties and those of the M-19."[92] This outright criticism is an indication of the remaining distrust of the established political system, regardless of the actors.

Surprisingly, the ELN has found a potential political alliance with the emerging left party, PDA. The PDA has made significant gains in local elections, and the ELN publicly supported the PDA presidential candidate in 2006.[93]

EXTERNAL ACTORS AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Many countries have demonstrated real commitment to finding a successful and peaceful path to a cease-fire agreement with the ELN. While the ELN is regularly considered second tier compared to the FARC, the ELN's ideological commitment garnered sympathy from the international community. Despite repeated failures at coming to a peace agreement, the ELN continues to receive support. Attempts at peace have always found ready advocates in various countries, institutions, or even celebrities. Safe houses and protected passage are typically provided for ELN negotiations.[94] However, to date, no peace accords have been reached.

Cuba

Cuba has long held an affinity toward the ELN and has hosted peace negations, expressing an interest in legitimizing the insurgency. In November 2002, a declaration of intent was signed, signaling the ELN's commitment to peace, but the declaration was abandoned during the change of presidential administrations.[95] An ELN commander was released from government imprisonment for the expressed reason of attending peace talks held in Havana in 2005.[96] After Fidel Castro

stepped down as Cuban president in 2008, his successor and brother, Raúl Castro, began facilitating peace negotiations.[97]

Nicaragua

In addition to the clear influence of the Cuban Revolution, the success of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas was very influential to the ELN beginning in the late 1970s. The Sandinistas were also influenced by the Cuban Revolution, and their success in establishing a left-wing government bolstered the resolve of the ELN. The ELN sent some members to Nicaragua to witness the final takeover of the government there.[98]

Spain

In 1997, an ambitious "preagreement" was crafted between the ELN and the Colombian government, facilitated by the Colombian National Conciliation Commission. This broad-sweeping preagreement was "to have been studied and ratified by the ELN Central Command and the Colombian president, but before these steps could be taken, news of the plan was leaked, and the resulting public debate prevented those last steps from being taken."[99]

Costa Rica

Costa Rica hosted a broad spectrum peace talk in October 2000. The FARC declined to attend, but the ELN has demonstrated consistent interest in peace negotiations in the twenty-first century.[100]

Venezuela

The ELN received implicit support from Venezuela. Prior to his death, former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez provided "guerrilla units the ability to cross Venezuelan borders to 'rest and re-supply with little concern that they would be pursued by Venezuelan forces.' "[101] At this time, it is unknown whether the current Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro Moros will continue to provide that support, though given that he is an avid supporter of the Cuba, it is highly likely that he would therefore continue support to the ELN.

Germany

Germany hosted civic leaders conducting peace negotiations with the ELN in the late 1990s.[102] A significant negation occurred in Germany, where the ELN signed an agreement "stating that it would not kidnap pregnant women or anyone over seventy-five years of age."[103]

FINANCES, LOGISTICS, AND SUSTAINMENT

After a period of internal struggle, the leadership of the ELN understood that it needed to attain financial solvency. To that end, during the mid-1980s, the ELN devised a plan to gain control of targeted key resource-rich, economically significant areas. "These strategic regions were concentrated in the Magdalena Medio area, as well as in the country's frontier with Venezuela. More specifically, the ELN planned to play a dominant role in the oil-producing area of Barrancabermeja, in the coal-producing region of Carmen and San Vicente, as well as in the northern Antioquia and southern Cauca, which were the site[s] of strategic highways and important agricultural production. The ELN also established a strong presence in Norte de Santander, near the country's border with Venezuela, as well as in Urabá, the banana-producing region of the Caribbean coast."[104]

The ELN hoped to exploit the resource-rich areas to supplement its coffers. The ELN planned to impose "taxes" (*impuestos*)—extortion—on the businesses in these areas, specifically the multinational corporations. In addition to imposing taxes, the ELN employed "retentions"—kidnappings—mostly of high-level foreign executives hired by multinational corporations in the extractive sector.[105] Additionally, the ELN has gained enough legitimacy to negotiate with these corporations directly; in exchange for taxes, the ELN guarantees they will not damage infrastructure or kidnap employees.[106]

Figure 7-9. ELN areas of influence.

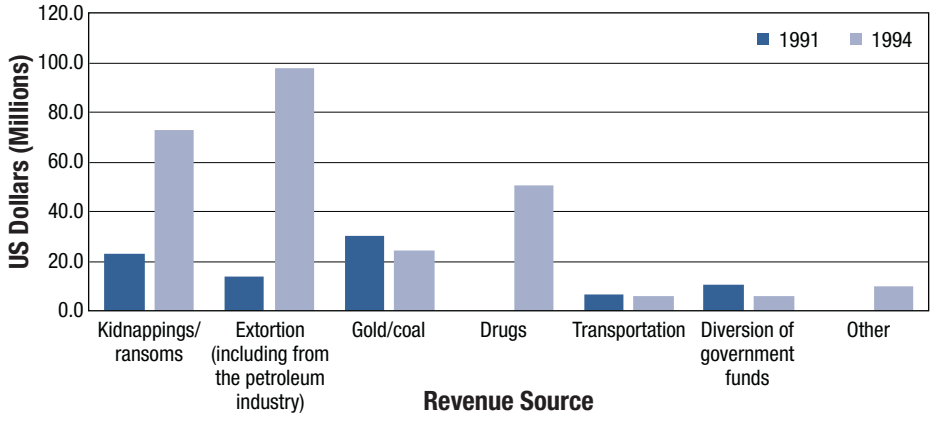

Figure 7-10. Estimates of ELN revenues, in 1991 and 1994, in millions of US dollars.

The significance of this model cannot be underestimated: "While Soviet-supported leftist groups would begin their swan song in the 1980s, the ELN would ride a wave of increasing power through the dawn of the twenty-first century."[107] The economic independence gained by the ELN's practice of extortion and kidnapping has fueled its ability to survive into the twenty-first century.

There is evidence that the ELN's reliance on drug trafficking has increased as its emphasis on extortion and kidnapping has decreased.[108] This shift has occurred primarily within the last ten years, but there is inconsistency on exact numbers. Known areas of influence for these recent ELN activities reside in the drug trafficking realm, specifically on the Venezuelan border.[109]

The ELN's reliance on independent financing was a significant factor in its sustainment after the fall of the Soviet empire. The resistance to changing financing sources could have contributed to a decline in their significance at the turn of the century. Also, there is evidence that resistance may be waning. At the ELN Congress session in 1996, Manuel Pérez, ELN leader, decided "not to get involved in drug trafficking" as involvement in drug trafficking was not in line with ELN moral principles.[110] At this time, financing sources declined. "Only a few of its fronts collect taxes from the *campesinos* who grow coca or from those who produce coca paste. Kidnapping and extortion of foreign companies—the ELN's main sources of financing in past decades—have diminished."[111] The FARC and the paramilitaries adapted to the new opportunities presented by the drug trade, and initially the ELN declined to participate. This trend appears to be changing, however, as ELN attacks in drug trafficking regions have significantly increased.

The logistical details were less successfully executed than the plan for independent financing. Unless the rare headquarter camp could

be established, the ELN often struggled to acquire sufficient resources for guerrillas, leading to desertion. Constant movement, tedium, and a lack of supplies nurtured disputes and revenges.[112] Punishment for eating more than "ones share" could have devastating, even deadly consequences, but "the stiff application of a vague code of behavior promoted fear and disrespect from the low ranks to the cadres."[113]

A typical logistical failure of the ELN was in the delegation of cooking. Cooking for fellow guerrillas was a task adamantly avoided by rural, jungle-based guerrillas. Those in charge of cooking by necessity moved slower through the jungle; "the transportation of pans, supplies and foodstuffs was burdensome and loud. . . . A cook was thus an easy target during an attack."[114] This task was given to guerrillas as punishment or to shame a fellow guerrilla. This inability to delegate such a banal task demonstrates why internal divisions threatened to disestablish the ELN. These internal conflicts have lessened under Bautista's leadership.

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CHAPTER 8.

MOVIMIENTO 19 DE ABRIL (M-19)

TIMELINE

1849	Conservative and Liberal Parties are founded.
1899–1903	"The War of the Thousand Days"—120,000 people die in civil war between Liberals and Conservatives.
1946 (–1965)	La Violencia ("The Violence"), a localized civil war characterized by widespread violence between Liberal and Conservatives in the countryside. The conflict resulted in the deaths of 180,000–300,000 Colombians.
April 9, 1948	Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala is assassinated in Bogotá. The assassin is killed on the spot and the Bogotazo riot ensues.
1949	Conservative Party candidate Laureano Gómez Castro wins the presidential election. Colombian Communist Party introduces "mass self-defense" as means for peasants to protect themselves from armed Conservatives.
June 1, 1953	President Gomez is deposed by a military coup. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla becomes the new president of Colombia.
May 1, 1957	President Rojas resigns under the pressure of Liberals and Conservatives united under a combined political entity called the "National Front."
1958	Conservatives and Liberals agree to form the National Front, a power-sharing agreement, in a bid to end civil war.
August 7, 1958	The first National Front president, Alberto Lleras Carmago, takes office.
August 1962	President Leon Valencia Munoz is inaugurated.
1970	National People's alliance is formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.
April 19, 1970	Populist party the National Popular Alliance is denied electoral victory by Conservatives; the M-19 guerrilla group emerges.
January 1974	M-19 members steal Simón Bolívar's sword, gaining national attention.
February 1976	M-19 kidnaps, tries, and executes José Raquel Mercado, president of Confederation of Workers of Colombia.
1976–1978	M-19 engages in public actions, such as the distribution of milk, chocolate, and toys, alongside its armed propaganda operations.
1978	President Turbay begins intense fight against drug traffickers.
December 31, 1979	M-19 tunnels into a Colombian Army weapons depot, taking more than 5,000 weapons.

February 1980	M-19 guerrillas seize the Dominican Republics' embassy in Bogotá; hostages are held for sixty-one days.
August 1982	President Belisario Betancur Cuartas is inaugurated. During his inaugural speech, he announces that the Colombian government will engage in peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas.
November 18, 1982	President Betancur signs Congressional Law 35, granting general amnesty to all guerrilla combatants.
May 28, 1984	Cease-fire begins under the Aribe Agreement.
1985	Eleven judges and ninety others are killed after M-19 guerrillas force their way into the Palace of Justice.
August 1986	President Virgilio Barco Vargas is inaugurated.
May 1988	M-19 kidnaps Conservative party leader Álvaro Gómez Hurtado. Hurtado is released two months later in exchange for the promise of a national summit to include guerrilla representatives.
March 1, 1989	Colombian government and M-19 sign the Cauca Declaration, providing the rebels safe haven and opening the way for talks and eventual demobilization.
March 1990	M-19 becomes a political party, the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD-M-19).
August 1990	President César Gaviria Trujillo is inaugurated.
February 1, 1991	Bolívar's sword is returned as a symbol of M-19's demobilization.

ORIGINS OF M-19

The Movimiento 19 de Abril, or M-19, was founded in 1972 by a diverse group of about twenty[1] students, artists, and professionals disenchanted by the restricted opportunities for democratic participation in Colombian politics. Several of its early progenitors had already taken up arms with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) but were dissatisfied with the groups' ideologies and strategies.

For the M-19 founders, the presidential elections held on April 19, 1970, defined Colombia's anemic democratic institutions. The National Front pact that ended Rojas's dictatorship officially restricted participation in elections to the Liberal and Conservative Parties. However, political opposition to the two parties' dominance did arise. Popular movements, such as Rojas's Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO, or National Popular Alliance), ran candidates under the

Liberal and Conservative labels to challenge the establishment. Rojas founded his party in 1961 after returning from exile, appealing to the urban masses and peasantry by promising solutions to the high unemployment and inflation plaguing the country.[2] The former dictator ran under the Conservative label in the 1970 presidential elections against the National Front Conservative candidate, Misael Pastrana Borrero.[a] A poll conducted shortly before the election showed Rojas with a comfortable lead ahead of Pastrana. Nevertheless, National Front candidate Pastrana was announced the victor. Many in Colombia, including the M-19 founders, believed that Rojas was robbed of his victory by systematic electoral fraud.

The group's adoption of the date as the name for its movement signaled its intentions to protect the people against electoral theft through force of arms. At first, M-19 leaders had thought to form "urban guerrilla enclaves under the name Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN)" after the example of the Uruguayan Tupamaros. The disgruntled popular sentiment sweeping across Colombia after Rojas's defeat, however, convinced M-19 founders to adopt a name based on the national event.[3]

Despite their firm connections with Rojas's popular movement and the associated party ANAPO, the formation of M-19 also owed a great deal to the FARC. Several of its founders, including Jaime Bateman, were former FARC guerrillas. The FARC itself claimed that M-19 evolved from its urban wing. In support of that conjecture, FARC leader Jacob Arenas argued that his organization provided the men, money, and ideas for M-19. In this regard, M-19 could be considered a FARC "fifth column," operating within ANAPO. Ultimately, however, FARC leadership was unable to resolve the "internal contradictions" with Bateman, who firmly severed ties to the organization.[4] In describing its own origins, M-19 emphasized its links to ANAPO, not the FARC.

[a] The pact establishing the National Front ensured that the presidency rotated between the Liberal and Conservative parties each election year. The presidency rotated to the Conservative party in 1970, so each candidate who ran did so under the Conservative label.

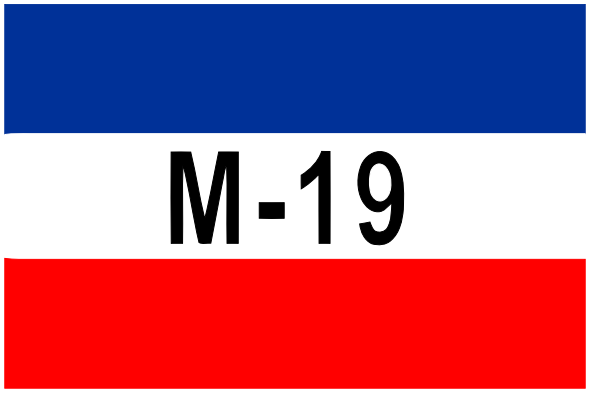

Figure 8-1. Flag of M-19.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMAND AND CONTROL

Organizational Structure

M-19, unlike most leftist insurgent groups in Colombia at the time, adopted a specifically urban strategy early in its formation. M-19's focus on urban centers as the primary theater of operations necessitated a structure that relied heavily on an underground that was organized with a cellular structure. Its structure maximized secrecy through a technique called compartmentalization. The early structure of the group emphasized the weight M-19 leadership accorded the political aspect of an insurgency. While M-19 maintained that substantive change in Colombia's political system necessitated force of arms, the group's leadership also recognized the importance of education and organization amongst the "masses." Forming a popular army capable of defeating Colombian security forces first required uniting different sectors of Colombian society, each with their own interests, through influencing public opinion.[b] As the group matured, M-19 moved into the rural hinterlands, with limited success. The group adopted a more traditional, hierarchical structure to meet the demands of rural insurgency that relied more on force of arms, not politics, to achieve its objectives. M-19's organizational structure was highly flexible and adaptable. The group's periodic changes in strategy and tactics frequently led to low-level organizational restructure to accommodate the alterations.

[b] See Crossett and Newton on Solidarity for an example of a social movement that successfully developed a narrative and program capable of uniting disparate sectors of society.[5]

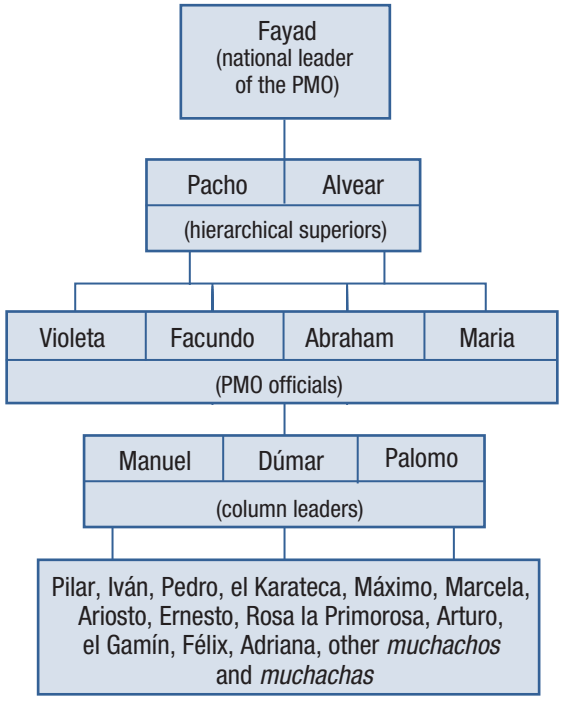

Figure 8-2. An example of an organizational structure adopted by M-19.

Leadership

M-19 leadership was drawn from a number of existing guerrilla organizations as well as from various regions and professions. Unfortunately for M-19, the Colombian government and paramilitaries proved especially effective in decimating the ranks of the M-19 leadership, at times severely hampering the group's operational capability. The earliest M-19 leader, Jaime Bateman Cayón, perished in a plane crash in 1983. In the 1980s, M-19 commanders Iván Marino Ospina, Álvaro Fayad Delgado, and Carlos Pizarro Leongómez were all murdered by Colombian security forces or the paramilitaries.[6] Antonio Navarro Wolff assumed leadership of the demobilized guerrillas after Pizarro's murder in 1990.

These leaders were drawn from several different existing organizations. One contingent, including Jaime Bateman Cayón, Álvaro Fayad Delgado, Iván Marino Ospina, and Carlos Pizarro Leongómez, migrated to M-19 from the Communist party and the FARC. A separate cadre came from the socialist ANAPO, including Carlos Toledo Plata, Andrés Almarales, and Israel Santamaría.[7]

The early founders of the group, mostly young people, came from Colombian urban centers such as Bogotá, Cali, and Santa Marta. Each

region exhibits distinct characteristics, which clearly had an imprint on the overall style and tenor of the group. Most notable is the impact of the charismatic Jaime Bateman Cayón, acknowledged as the group's primary founder, a tall, lanky, handsome man from the Caribbean city of Santa Marta. Bateman, famous for his endurance and skill in dancing, had been expelled from the ascetic FARC. He had repeatedly urged FARC leadership to take the fight to the cities rather than focusing solely on the hinterlands.[8]

Bateman is also attributed with developing M-19's distinctive relaxed, warm discourse, which separated them from the harsher, rigid style of the typical leftist guerrillas. He articulated a "vital new discourse that was warm and very easy for common people to understand." The M-19's famous early motto, "Revolution is a Party," was also Bateman's invention. The sentiment "surmised a mood, a spirit that was expressed in day-to-day life" of M-19.[9]

In contrast to the leadership of the other guerrilla groups in Colombia, M-19's leadership and core members were disproportionately drawn from the ruling classes of the country.

Jaime Bateman Cayón ("El Flaco")

Bateman was born into a middle-class, liberal family in Santa Marta in 1940. Bateman's childhood proximity to the United Fruit Company factories influenced his participation in insurgent groups. There, he saw the common Colombian worker banned from the company's stores, pools, and other amenities while bearing the brunt of the labor. His participation in contentious political activity began at an early age. He joined protests against then dictator General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1957. Bateman also later joined various Communist organizations, even traveling to Moscow, where he trained in the social sciences. Later, Bateman joined the FARC, where he acted as the secretary for Manuel Marulanda, Jacob Arenas, and Ciro Trujillo.[10] He left the organization because of disputes with its leaders.[11] Bateman reportedly favored initiating armed insurrection in urban environments and including nationalist elements in the struggle, a position with which the FARC leadership did not agree. Bateman died in a plane crash in Panama in 1983.[12]

Álvaro Fayad Delgado ("El Turco")

Like other leaders, Fayad was an educated man, trained in psychology at the National University of Colombia. He was raised in Cartago, Valle de Cauca Department. Fayad first participated in leftist political activity as a member of a Communist youth organization. While there, he met Bateman and helped found the M-19. He was imprisoned after

Operation Colombia but was pardoned by President Betancur in 1982. Fayad took over the leadership of the group in 1985. He was the primary instigator of the Palace of Justice siege. In 1986, policemen killed Fayad in a friend's home in Bogotá.[13]

Iván Marino Ospina ("Felipe Gonzalez")

Marino was born in the Valle de Cauca Department. He joined a Communist youth organization, through which he met his fellow M-19 founders. Marino took leadership of the M-19 in 1983 after Bateman's death that same year. He perished in 1985 during a firefight with the Colombian army in Cali.

Carlos Pizarro Leongómez ("Antonio or Caballo Loco")

Pizarro was born into a privileged family, the son of Navy Admiral Juan Antonio Pizarro. An educated man, Pizarro studied law at the National University of Colombia, where he participated in leftist political activism. He later joined the FARC but left, with Bateman and others, after disagreements with FARC leadership, to found M-19. Pizarro was imprisoned in 1979 after his arrest in the Santander Department, but he was granted amnesty by President Betancur in 1982. Pizarro became the M-19's commander in 1986 and led the group to the negotiating table with the Colombian government in 1989. Pizarro was assassinated while aboard a commercial airliner en route to political rallies. At the time, he was a presidential candidate in the 1990 elections. The Colombian authorities ultimately held the leader of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), Carlos Castaño, responsible for his death.[14]

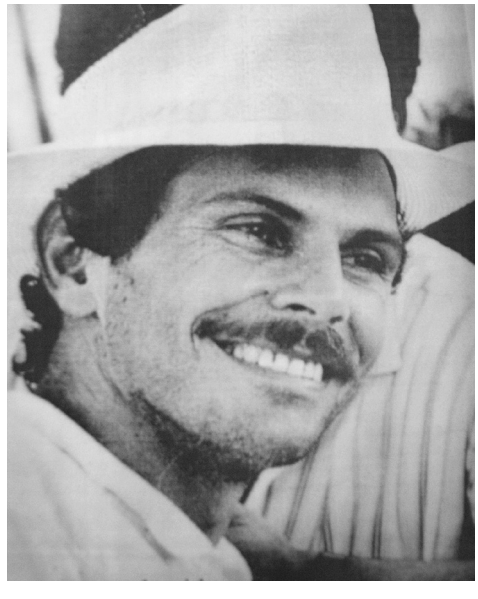

Figure 8-3. Carlos Pizarro.

Antonio Navarro Wolff

Navarro assumed leadership of the demobilized M-19 after the paramilitaries assassinated Pizarro. An engineer by trade, Navarro was educated at both Londonborough University in Britain and University of Valle in Colombia, where he later became a professor. Navarro joined the M-19 guerrillas in the 1970s, participating in the infamous Palace of Justice siege in 1985. Later that same year, he lost the lower part of his left leg in an army grenade attack.[15] After the demobilization and disarmament of the M-19, Navarro launched a successful and distinguished political career. After a failed presidential campaign in 1990, President Gaviria appointed him minister of health. In the 1990s, Navarro was elected mayor and served two terms in the Colombian congress, once as a representative and later as a senator. In 2008, Navarro was elected governor of the Nariño Department.[16] Currently, Navarro is the national spokesman for the Progressive Movement.[17]

Figure 8-4. Antonio Navarro Wolff.

Command and Control

The cellular structure favored by M-19 presented difficulties for command and control. M-19 leadership was able to influence the strategic direction and tactical integrity through a number of functions. Underground members of various urban cells report that they established automatic meetings with their fellow operatives in order to maintain contact, train, and plan operations. Despite these challenges, and the military structure of the organization, M-19 tried to implement its

political ideals internally. As a result, M-19 members made many of the group's decisions collectively.[18]

M-19 leaders also regularly held national conferences to set the strategic direction for the upcoming year.[19] One of the most important national conferences was the seventh, held in June of 1979.[20] There, the M-19 defined their overarching political objective as the struggle for democracy, clearly separating the group from its Communist counterparts such as the ELN or the FARC. The last, and perhaps most significant national conference, took place in October 1989. At the tenth national conference, 227 of 230 M-19 insurgents who had gathered there voted to disarm and demobilize.[21]

COMPONENTS OF THE INSURGENCY

Underground and Auxiliary

M-19 leadership adopted a cellular structure to organize its underground networks operating in major urban centers such as Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Insurgent organizations with a cellular structure typically trade off a tight command-and-control apparatus for the integrity of the organization in dense, urban environments. Other urban insurgent movements also adopted a cellular structure; for example, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) used such a structure to ensure its continued viability in light of the sophisticated counterinsurgent tactics employed by the British army. Cellular structures rely on small, agile units, called cells, usually comprising only a handful of operatives and a commander. Cellular structures are typically characterized by compartmentalization, a technique used by insurgents to severely restrict contact among operators and between subordinates and superiors. The restrictions prevent compromising the entire organization in case of capture or surveillance.[c]

The M-19 underground fulfilled a number of functions, including security, logistics, propaganda, and operations. In regard to the latter, the M-19 underground executed several important operations designed to influence public opinion. M-19 called the operations "armed propaganda." As the term suggests, the operations relied more on the force of ideas than the force of arms. One of M-19's most infamous operations was the theft of Simón Bolívar's sword from the national museum. Members of the tight-knit M-19 underground in Bogotá planned and

[c] Please see Bos for more detailed information on cellular structures and compartmentalization generally.[22]

carried out the operation, which served as a launching point for the movement.[23]

Some similar operations were specifically designed to garner support for the organization among the poor, creating a future recruitment pool for a popular army. The approach was modeled after the Sandinistas' strategy in Nicaragua. M-19 operatives, à la Robin Hood, hijacked a milk delivery truck and distributed the milk to children in poor neighborhoods.[d] Later, the M-19 underground dropped its strict clandestine policy, albeit with reservations, to work directly with the population in urban slums. During the 1985 truce with the Colombian government, M-19 referred to the areas of influence they had established as "peace camps."[e] Operatives gained the trust of local populations by addressing concrete needs of the people. Those needs were determined through consultations with marginalized populations. Among other activities, the underground handed out food, clothing, and construction materials—all without the masks that typically hid the guerrillas' identities. Other operatives performed simple tasks, such as guarding hoses that supplied water to neighborhoods. Powerful landlords and unscrupulous land profiteers often cut off the water as an intimidation tactic. As one underground member described:

> We met with business owners to support the labor demands of the employees, with the owners of the Central de Abastos (Corabastos) to negotiate a space in the plaza in the name of hundreds of small-scale retailers, with owners of bullfighters in defense of the national *toreros*, with television programmers, pro-actor unions—the list was a long one.

A former insurgent believed that the populace responded positively to the underground's involvement in addressing local grievances because the underground's solutions were ultimately backed by the force of arms.[26] The underground's efforts paid dividends. By 1984, M-19's underground swelled from a handful of members in 1983 to more than one hundred, not including the network of sympathizers and collaborators (the auxiliary, discussed below).[27] After the truce fell apart in mid-1985, the army destroyed the camps.[28]

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[d] M-19 trained its underground in weapons, and reportedly the operatives did carry arms during the group's operations. However, in many instances, the underground successfully carried out armed propaganda with limited, or no, casualties. An inexperienced operative tasked with carrying out the hijacking of the milk delivery truck shot the driver accidentally.[24]

[e] M-19 founded the first official peace camps in 1985 after entering into a temporary truce with the Colombian government following negotiations spanning 1983–1985. The truce fell apart shortly thereafter.[25]

Building a solid base of support with the potential for a major insurrection requires the political education of the targeted population. Successful armed propaganda operations required nurturing a cadre of educated, and creative, operatives. Much of the early work of the underground revolved around careful study of influential leftist thinkers. The typical treatises by Mao, Che Guevara, and Lenin were complemented by works of Colombian novelists and thinkers, such as Gabriel García Márquez.[f] Likewise, the underground's social work in the urban slums was accompanied by education that attempted to connect the population's grievances with the political situation in the country. One underground operative developed a technique for establishing peace camps in Cali that was replicated elsewhere. "El sardino Lucia," as he was called, planted two flags—the M-19 flag and the Colombian flag—on an empty lot in a Cali slum. With a megaphone, he delivered a speech that quickly attracted a number of recruits. The empty lot, with the planted flags, became a pseudo-town square where locals could meet and talk with their neighbors and the M-19. The underground also used a variety of symbols in the square to increase a sense of belonging fostered by the civic actions taking place there. At its height, the M-19 had as many as fifteen peace camps in a number of major urban centers.[29]

Lastly, the M-19 underground fulfilled a number of logistical requirements crucial to the movement. Early on, M-19 leadership trained the underground in observation skills that would help the group acquire the weapons, money, and other items it needed to operate and survive. Data gathered from careful observation of the underground's immediate environment—and personal networks—led to resource-gathering missions. In one of the movement's first weapons runs, an underground unit broke into the home of a close friend of one of the members to steal his weapons.[30] M-19's most successful weapons raid, however, was on a military compound in Bogotá, where operatives constructed a tunnel leading to the weapons depot, capturing more than 5,000 weapons. Once in possession of the weapons, the underground was instrumental in storing and transporting them.[31] As a testament to the inexperience of the group, some members of the underground stashed the weapons with friends and family. The Colombian army captured and tortured these M-19 collaborators.[32] After M-19 expanded from the city to the rural countryside to develop a popular army, the underground transported weapons and other materials to fronts; this was sometimes the

[f] Márquez is the author of the literary classic *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a 1967 novel describing several generations of a Colombian family through the turbulent entrée of Colombia into the modern world. Márquez received the Nobel Prize for Literature for his work in 1982. Márquez is known for his leftist sympathies and support of insurgent organizations throughout Latin America.

only connection the fronts had with the high command.[33] Kidnapping supplied the bulk of M-19's finances. Housing the kidnapped individuals while waiting for the ransom to materialize fell to the underground. Operatives rented facilities to establish safe houses with the capacity to hold the prisoners for extended periods while M-19 waited for ransom from the target.[34] The safe house, called a "house-jail," was first used by the Tupamaros in Uruguay.[35]

Like any clandestine movement, the M-19 underground faced serious challenges to its security. As discussed above, the group's cellular structure, and the attendant compartmentalization, was a first crucial layer of security for the group. The underground's safe houses provided an important security component. A former member of the M-19 underground described how she and her urban unit first set up a safe house in Bogotá. Operatives rented the home themselves rather than relying on sanctuary from the local population. The group went to tremendous lengths to develop a plausible cover for the "residents" living there, making every effort to present a typical Colombian multi-family unit to curious onlookers. The underground acquired curtains, furniture, and other decor to lend plausibility to the house's normalcy. Visiting operatives were even provided "spouses." Several operatives had children, who also resided at the house. Ironically, another M-19 safe house, located in Melgar, was in the same town that housed the military's counterguerrilla unit. An additional safe house in Bogotá, located in close proximity to a military weapons depot, was used as cover to construct and underground tunnel to seize the weapons. On at least one occasion, an M-19 safe house also acted as a sanctuary for guerrillas from an international leftist insurgent movement.[g] M-19 leadership also used safe houses scattered throughout major urban centers as hideouts. Colombian security forces killed Iván Marino Ospina while he hid in a safe house in Cali.[37]

In addition to the underground, M-19 also received assistance from the auxiliary—collaborators and supporters of an insurgent movement that are not necessarily active members of the organization. The auxiliary component often worked closely with the underground. Supporters acted as "spouses" for M-19 operatives in safe houses, of particular use because they could not be traced to any illegal activity. In one instance, a respected lawyer sympathetic to the movement acted as a spouse to an M-19 member living in a safe house. His patina of "normality" was crucial to developing a believable cover for residents there. He continued his practice and knew nothing of the underground's internal assignments or any details of what went on in the house. Another woman,

[g] In this instance, the Tupamaros from Uruguay.[36]

a poor peasant from the countryside, also acted as a spouse. In some instances, family members of the underground participants also lived in the safe houses, providing assistance as necessary but having little to no information about the group or its operations. On the rural fronts, auxiliary offered intelligence and assistance with transport, and small children often acted as couriers.[38] In the peace camps, the areas of influence that M-19 established in urban slums in the mid-1980s, M-19 operatives assigned potential recruits peripheral activities, such as extortion and robbery, to test their combat mettle and integrate them into the organization.[39]

Armed Component

At its founding, M-19 operated primarily in urban centers, a strategy that informed the tactics adopted by the leadership. The group initially sought to distance itself from an "apparatist" approach, which it believed placed an undue emphasis on the armed component of an insurgency. Instead, it used members of the urban underground component, seeking to cultivate popular support through the use of armed propaganda rather than strict military objectives. The popular support garnered from these spectacular operations, it was hoped, would form the seed of the broad-based support necessary to fully confront the state and its security force institutions.

It was not until several years after its formation, in 1978, that M-19 began to earnestly build its rural-based armed component. A former M-19 commander estimated that, at its height, M-19 could field approximately 1,500–2,000 combatants.[40] Henceforth, most of the activities in the urban underground components served to complement the operations of the armed component in the countryside. However, commando-like units, each with colorful names, continued to operate in the urban environment, planning and executing several high-profile operations, including the takeover of several embassies and a raid on a military weapons depot.[41] Some insurgents within the organization expressed concern that, at this juncture, M-19 began to emphasize the military component above the political objectives of the group.[42,43] In particular, a change in leadership from Bateman, who perished in a plane crash in 1983, to Iván Marino Ospina signaled a greater emphasis on the armed component. Under Marino's "trigger-happy leadership," the urban and political efforts declined, and the M-19 came to resemble a more traditional "'old-style' military guerrilla organization."[44] The emphasis on the armed component further solidified under the leadership of Carlos Pizarro Leongómez in the latter half of the 1980s.[45]

Figure 8-5. M-19 guerrilla.

The rural strategy was first hatched in 1978 at M-19's sixth national conference. There, the leadership opted to alter the existing organizational structure in favor of a traditional hierarchical model more conducive to military operations.[46,47] At its height, M-19 had two primary fronts—the Frente Sur, or Southern Front, in Putumayo and the Frente Occidental, or Western Front, operating in the Caldas, Cauca, Valle de Cauca, Quindío, and Tolima Departments. Each front was further divided into columns, each for a different municipality.[48]

Former M-19 insurgents describe the rural fronts as organized around units called "mobiles." These mobiles, built on work already done by peasant organizations in rural areas, were to be the "embryos of the popular army" that M-19 hoped to construct to confront the state.[49,50] A long-standing M-19 member, María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo, was given the responsibility of nurturing the nascent mobiles. Based in Melgar, she aided mobiles located in Córdoba, Santander, Quindío, Tolima, Cauca, and Caquetá, supplying the units with ammunition, weapons, and money. She, along with a male companion, crisscrossed the departments in a Jeep with a false floor to transport the goods, sometimes evading military checkpoints, relying on quick thinking and "a pair of suggestive shorts, a loose blouse, and a pistol in [her] belt" to evade the soldiers.[51]

The military capabilities of the armed component varied. The armed component suffered a significant setback in 1981 after a botched invasion of Colombia by M-19 combatants exiled to Cuba in the aftermath

of the Dominican embassy siege.[h] The failed operation exposed the significant deficiencies in the group's military training. One former insurgent described the Southern Front, established before the Western Front, as having "heart" but little training in the way of tactics and techniques. The Southern Front received additional training in Cuban military schools, in addition to incorporating tactics of peasant origin.[52,i] At the peak of its capabilities, the Southern Front, led by Carlos Pizarro, sustained an engagement with the Colombian military for twenty-two days near Yarumales, in the Cauca Department, in December 1984. The army attacked the fortified peace camp that M-19 had established after the group had signed a truce with the government in 1984.[53]

Public Component

M-19 placed a great deal of emphasis on the political aspect of its organization. The guerrillas frequently operated in both the legal and illegal—overt and clandestine—worlds simultaneously. In 1990, after the M-19 agreed to disarm and demobilize, the guerrillas continued their struggle in the public component as a legal political party.

Two distinct periods in the M-19's public component are apparent. The first period corresponds to M-19's early alliance with ANAPO after General Rojas's electoral defeat in the 1970 presidential election. The second period came decades later, when, after signing a peace treaty in 1990, M-19 guerrillas laid down their arms and transitioned the movement into a legal political party, the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD M-19), or the M-19 Democratic Alliance.[54] This second phase is described in greater detail in the *Political Operations* section. However, M-19 ultimately failed to develop a solid organization with grassroots support, relying more on "audacious political-military feats" than the "patient work of building a political movement."[55]

When M-19 first formed in the early 1970s, the group was the de facto armed wing of ANAPO. General Rojas, a former military dictator and founder of the party, had a healthy cadre of supporters, many of them angry over his loss in the 1970 presidential elections. In large part, the M-19 was formed expressly to ensure, through force of arms, that the Colombian people were not swindled out of another election.

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[h] The failed operation is described in greater detail in the *Paramilitary Operations* section.

[i] The authors do not go into any great detail about exactly what constituted these tantalizing "intuitive" tactics adopted from local peasants. M-19 received foreign training and weapons from a number of foreign governments and non-state actors, described in the *Administrative* section.

After Rojas's death in 1975, a power struggle ensued over the future leadership of the party; leadership was eventually granted to his daughter, María Eugenia Rojas Pinilla. María Eugenia's husband, Samuel Moreno, another contender for the leadership, favored greater rapprochement with the Conservative party, a path that was denounced by the radical wing of the party.[56]

A short time later, another split divided ANAPO after the radical wing of the party left to form Socialist ANAPO. The radicals were dismayed over ANAPO's rapprochement with the traditional parties, the "enemy" to the radical faction. M-19 worked in concert with Socialist ANAPO, acting as the party's armed wing, making the group a distinctly "political-military" organization. There was overlap among the two group's leaderships, and some M-19 operatives simultaneously belonged to a legal political party and an illegal, clandestine insurgent movement. A "management team" within ANAPO, called the Buró, acted as M-19's command. The Buró was divided into two distinct branches, the political and the military, and made decisions on the basis of consensus. ANAPO's primary political tool was its newspaper, *Mayorías*, and one of M-19's early tasks was to keep the paper afloat. The newspaper was the primary conduit to educate the populace and influence public opinion. Arguments erupted within M-19, however, regarding the efficacy of this approach:

> We in the M-19 built a political-military alternative by less than orthodox means. The work in the ANAPO taught us a lot. *Mayorías* was not the Rude Pravda Lenin talked to us about in *What is to Be Done?* and the Leninist structuring of groups didn't work inside a populist party. One could not appeal to broad segments of the population with leftist radicalism.

Debates ensued over whether to halt production of the newspaper and direct the resources to military action or to continue with political education. By 1977, the *Mayorías* folded, precluding the need for any agreement on the matter. The M-19's connection with the newspaper exposed the guerrillas to the populace they purported to represent, moderating the typical orthodox leftist theory espoused by many leftist insurgents.[57]

IDEOLOGY

M-19 was part of a second wave of leftist guerrilla movements in Latin America in the 1970s that broke from the Castroist traditions of previous guerrillas. Many of the founders of the group began their

guerrilla careers in the FARC and the ELN, insurgent groups that did share genealogical ties with the Cuban Revolution. M-19, in contrast to other leftist guerrilla groups operating in Colombia, simultaneously viewed itself as nationalist, democratic, and revolutionary—and devoted to armed struggle.[58] If the other leftist guerrilla insurgents in Colombia wanted to "put the guerilla movement into the nation," M-19 wanted to "put the nation into the guerrilla movement."[59]

While Marxist views were certainly the backdrop for M-19's ideology, the group adopted a remarkably unconventional narrative that during the time was described as "nationalist and Trotskyist, romantic and nihilist, Communist and non-Communist."[60] The Colombian army could provide no evidence of foreign links between the group and Communist overlords in Moscow or other Soviet bloc countries. One national police chief, seemingly stymied by the inability to quickly pigeonhole M-19's narrative, held fast to the theory that M-19 was really a right-wing group in disguise.[61]

M-19's ideology made judicious use of an ingredient that was absent from the ideology of its leftist counterparts in Colombia—nationalism. M-19 founder and commander Jaime "El Flaco" Bateman told the faithful that the group had to "nationalize the revolution, place it beneath the feet of Colombia, make it a 'pachanga,' do it with 'bambucos, vallenatos, and cumbias' [Colombian rhythmic music], singing the national anthem."[62] During the Dominican embassy siege of 1980, the guerrillas periodically raised their fists in unison, singing the Colombian national anthem.[63] The nationalist strain, a pronounced contradiction from the internationalist perspective of other guerrilla groups at the time, is not surprising when considering that the initial impetus for the group's founding was anger and despair over the electoral fraud that robbed General Rojas of the 1970 presidential election. As one M-19 leader, Navarro, described, "we went into the mountains not to impose communism, but to open democratic spaces."[64] But, such as Colombian politics were at the time, one had to shoot in order to be heard, a former M-19 combatant said.[65] In an analysis of the motivations of former M-19 insurgents, in interviews, several of them cited the positive influence of popular literature with distinct nationalist overtones on their decisions to join the organization.[66]

The first crucial step in M-19's nationalist project was the resurrection of the respectability of the nation. Orthodox Marxist theory insisted that nationalism was a distinctly "bourgeois" value that was inappropriate for the practitioner aiming for the emancipation of the working class. M-19 leadership, by contrast, "began from the premise that national symbols were a national heritage." Reclaiming those symbols, and using them for a "second independence" movement that

more fully realized the ideals of their ancestors, was at the heart of M-19's nationalist project. The resurrection of Colombia, and especially Bolívar, in M-19 ideology represented a "latinamericanization" of guerrilla struggles in the region.[67]

LEGITIMACY

Throughout most of its armed operation stage, M-19 lacked a clearly articulated political vision for Colombians to consider. However, especially before its disastrous Palace of Justice siege in 1985, M-19 did enjoy popular sympathy, if not outright support, with its "daring theatrics" such as the Dominican embassy takeover and the theft of Simón Bolívar's sword. M-19 was adept at drawing attention to the conditions of inequality and "numbing political immobility" engendered by the two-party patronage system that disturbed so many Colombians.[68] One foreign minister called the M-19 a "symbol of desperation" in a country bedeviled by rampant illiteracy, unemployment, and inadequate resources to meet even the basic needs of many of its citizens.[69]

M-19 executed many showy, symbolic acts designed to present the group as the defender of the people's interests and to sway public opinion in favor of the movement. The sympathy continued even after M-19 dirtied its hands, murdering several men, including a union leader and an American unjustly accused of being a spy. For a time during the early 1980s, members of the M-19 retained their images of Robin Hood-like adventurers fighting on behalf of the people.[70]

The siege of the Palace of Justice in 1985 marked a turning point in public opinion of the M-19. The much-publicized bloodbath that followed the armed takeover of the building left a bitter taste for the group for many Colombians. Eleven Supreme Court Justices died in the conflagration alongside more than one hundred others.[71] The M-19 initially increased its kinetic operations against security forces in the aftermath of the siege, but the group eventually fine-tuned its strategy to harmonize with the public's war weariness. Instead, the M-19 actively sought dialogue with the Colombian government to facilitate its transition to a legitimate political party.[j]

As discussed in the *Ideology* section, M-19 wove nationalist, leftist, and revolutionary themes into its narrative. Not surprisingly, the symbolic act that launched M-19 into the public consciousness deftly interlaced all three of these themes. After releasing newspaper advertisements to build anticipation of its arrival, M-19 stole the sword of

[j] See the *Political Operations* section for a description of this important strategic transition.

Simón Bolívar, the spiritual godfather of the Colombian nation, from a national monument. In its place, the guerrillas left a note saying, "His sword now begins new combats. Now it confronts the Yanqui, the exploiter, those who deliver our country to sorrow, the landlord, the capitalist, the oligarch."[72] The symbolism positioned M-19 in a nationalist lineage dating back to the liberator himself. M-19, like Bolívar, would take up arms in just cause to free the Colombian people from a repressive regime. Ironically, M-19 leadership entrusted the safekeeping of Bolívar's sword to one of the most destructive forces in Colombia—drug lord Pablo Escobar. After signing a peace treaty with the federal government and transitioning to a legitimate political party in the early 1990s, M-19 retrieved the sword from Escobar, returning it to Colombian officials as a sign of good will.[73]

After this episode of political theater, M-19's actions targeted special interest groups perceived as especially harmful to the Colombian people. These included employers, union leaders, foreign corporations, and other agents associated with imperialist America. In February of 1976, M-19 abducted the leader of the Confederation of Workers of Colombia (CTC), José Raquel Mercado. M-19 accused Mercado of corrupt practices and collaboration with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

In 1981, M-19 abducted Chester Bitterman, an American missionary employed by the Wycliffe Bible Translators, a religious organization based in California. After his arrival in Bogotá for a medical procedure, Bitterman stopped at his employer's headquarters in the capital when six M-19 guerrillas entered the facility looking for the director. After learning that the director was not present, the M-19 members abducted Bitterman. The Wycliffe Society's Latin American branch, known at the time as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, was a controversial organization that specialized in studying native languages and customs. M-19 and other critics claimed that the organization's primary goal was the conversion of indigenous peoples in the region to Christianity, leading to the destruction of native cultures. M-19 also charged the institute with acting as front for the CIA.[74] The guerrillas demanded that the institute leave Colombia or Bitterman would be killed. The institute declined. After Bitterman was in captivity for six weeks, a woman telephoned radios, newspapers, and television stations reporting Bitterman's execution, indicating that his body could be found in an abandoned bus in Bogotá.[75] Colombian authorities retrieved the body.

MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

Motivations for involvement with insurgent organizations vary according to what stage of the process is analyzed. Individuals have different motivations for joining a movement, staying in a movement, and leaving a movement.[76] Decisions can be influenced by both the agency of the individual as well as surrounding environmental factors. Because of the clandestine nature of insurgent groups, this information is often difficult to extract. The following section is based on research that relies on in-depth interviews with fourteen former M-19 insurgents.[77,k]

The former M-19 insurgents consistently identified several factors as important influences on their decisions to join an insurgent group. The first set of factors emphasize the importance of the social networks, both family and friends, in the insurgents' decisions. M-19 leader Bateman described these networks as a "chain of affection."[78] The influence of family is important in several regards. Family influence can occur after a family crisis, such as a death or assault of a family member by an out-group that encourages support of the guerrilla movement. In some cultures, certain families have a long history of participation in guerrilla warfare, and this history influences each generation to continue in the venerated tradition.[79,80] An even fifty percent of M-19 insurgents indicated that their decisions to join the group were influenced by these family factors. One insurgent identified a family crisis stemming from a failure of the Conservative party to address pressing grievances as the impetus for family support of the leftist guerrilla movements. Interestingly, another insurgent noted that, although her family did not have a tradition of supporting guerrilla movements, her involvement in M-19 facilitated a large familial network of M-19 collaborators.[81]

In addition to familial networks, peer networks also played a role as motivation for joining the M-19. Peers might be similar to potential recruits in terms of basic demographic characteristics, giving recruiters access to a pool of recruits engaged in activities at work, school, or other political organizations that are similar to those of the recruiters. Another type of peer identified is the "revolutionary role model," who might have been better educated or more experienced in political issues than potential recruits but still shared many similar activities. These peers, whom recruits already knew—and in some cases, admired—acted as in important source of validation for recruits' decisions to join the organization. One recruit described meeting with a

[k] Please note that the number of M-19 members interviewed was not great enough to be a representative sample of the whole group. Rather, the research discussed above should be read as anecdotal. However, because of the difficulty in penetrating clandestine groups, anecdotal information is often all that is available.

figure she respected, a well-known member of a local teacher's union who was connected to the education sector in the federal government, soon after joining the organization. At the meeting, she noted she was happy because she knew him from her workplace and regarded him as a trusted figure.

In other instances, the "peers" were more removed from the recruits. Another recruit described the influence of Camilo Torres, a priest and proponent of liberation theology, as well as the activities of Che Guevara. In his neighborhood, he also interacted with a number of people from ANAPO. Once he decided he wanted to join the M-19, his ANAPO connections made it easier to gain acceptance into the clandestine group.[82] In all, six of the fourteen M-19 members identified family and peer networks as motivational factors for joining the group.[83]

In addition to describing the impact of social networks, recruits also recounted joining the M-19 in response to environmental factors, including the general "revolutionary climate" as well as government policies that denied ordinary citizens legal channels to effectively address their grievances. Recruits reported feeling a profound lack of political efficacy, noting the inability to make significant contributions or reforms to local or federal governments. A number of the recruits were already active in political organizations, pursuing political reform through peaceful and legal means. When the peaceful activity was ineffective—or worse, met with heavy government repression—recruits turned to armed violence to effect the political and social reforms they felt were necessary to correct Colombia's political course. One woman who joined M-19 described her frustration and anger over police repression of peaceful strikes and protests, as well the failure of such protests to produce any significant results. She said that at many of the events she had participated in, police beat or killed protestors. Protestors were always prepared, she said, to run from the police, who carried truncheons, guns, and tear gas equipment. Witnessing the helplessness of the protestors, including a family member who was assaulted by policemen at a protest event, coupled with a feeling of political inefficacy, convinced her of the need to defend her rights with arms.[84]

Other important environmental factors included the influence of "generational imprinting." Researchers have found that social or political events that occur during what is called the "reminisce peak," usually sometime during late adolescence or early adulthood, have an especially strong influence on an individual's worldview. In the case of Colombia, such events could be the Cuban or the Nicaraguan Revolutions. Some M-19 recruits recounted that the success of the Sandinistas in effecting political change in Nicaragua was an important precipitating event. One recruit said, "The historical reference of the Sandinista

revolution was very important, because you believed that if revolution is possible in Nicaragua, then it was possible everywhere.[85] In her biography of her time in the M-19, Maria Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo made reference to the inspiration of the Sandinistas as well as other Latin American insurgent groups such as the Tupamaros guerrillas from Uruguay.[86] Describing the revolutionary fervor infecting Colombia and other parts of the world, Vásquez said, "My generation wanted both to end the war in Vietnam and to change the world by revolutionary war; practice free love and build utopias in South America; break political continuity and propose other ideologies; and create a more egalitarian society."[87] In the research conducted on M-19 motivations, M-19 members identified this generational imprint, which cultivated a revolutionary climate in Colombia, as a more important motivational factor than government repression.[88]

Lastly, the power of ideas can also compel recruits to join armed organizations. The most frequently cited reason among the former M-19 insurgents was a "concern for social injustice." Issues endemic throughout Colombia during the time—rural poverty, homelessness, violation of human rights—encouraged some to address the widespread grievances through political action. For those who joined guerrilla organizations, of course, political action eventually meant armed violence. As discussed above, recruits to guerrilla organizations like M-19 were already active in various politically or socially minded organizations, especially while attending universities. One insurgent reported first belonging to a group, Empujemos ("Let's Push"), which provided fellowship but also opportunities for community work. Among conducting other activities, the group offered legal advice to women and workers. Her work for and dedication to the group attracted the attention of M-19, which she was later asked to join. She eventually discovered that nearly everyone in Empujemos was in fact a member of M-19.[89] Likewise, Vásquez explained her attraction to leftist ideologies and groups in terms of a strong desire for social justice.[90] Not surprisingly, many of the recruits who joined M-19 expressed their concerns, and found solutions, in the predominant ideology of the time—Communism. Of the participants interviewed, 78.6 percent identified a "concern for social injustice," and 64.3 percent identified "communist and nationalist ideologies" as key influences motivating them to join M-19.[91,1]

The motivations for joining are different than the motivations for staying in a guerrilla organization. Vásquez, whose autobiography about her time in the M-19 is cited above, described in vivid detail the

[1] Participants were allowed to select more than one motivation.

psychological impact of living the double life necessary for maintaining the security of a clandestine insurgent group:

> Two diametrically opposed women lived inside me, one delicate and fragile, the other tough as nails. When I got back from the trips [related to M-19 activities] and went into the house, the characters pitted against each other. I felt dizzy, unreal. . . . Family I no longer had . . . I felt utterly uprooted.[92]

Life in a rural-based insurgency also has its travails. Inadequate food, shelter, and clothing and other physical hardships associated with life in a remote area can quickly quell the romantic ideal of guerrilla life some recruits may have. The average length of service of those interviewed was about ten years.[93] Approximately forty-three percent of the interviewees reported belonging to M-19 for three to nine years. A greater percentage, around fifty-seven percent, reported belonging to the group for a greater length of time, from nine to eighteen years.[94,m] The most important reason M-19 members reported for staying in the group was their dependence on the group. Nearly seventy-nine percent of the participants in the study described being "very dependent" on the group. One of the former insurgents recounted that she was "totally dependent" on the organization "politically, militarily, and economically."[95] Virtually all of her daily activities centered on work for M-19. In addition, many of her basic necessities, such as clothing and shelter, were also acquired from the group. These effects are amplified when insurgents belong to rural fronts, where individual autonomy is more severely restricted due to the harsh environmental conditions.[96] Additional factors that induced continued participation in the group included the fraternity the group provided. More than ninety-two percent of interviewees reported that the sense of brotherhood permeating the group at least sometimes provided an incentive for staying in the group.[97,n] Other important factors included individuals' sense of how important they were to the group,[98] as well as its clandestine affiliation. In the latter case, the clandestine nature of the group cultivated behavior patterns that reinforced continued participation in the group.[99]

In the case of M-19, there are two important stages at which members left the insurgency. In October of 1989, at its tenth national conference, 227 of 230 M-19 members voted to lay down their arms and join

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[m] The author noted that the length of service of M-19 members was arguably skewed because she was unable to interview any senior officials who may have belonged to group for a more extended period.

[n] Fifty percent of participants reported that "membership perception of brotherhood and self-sacrifice for the group" always applied, and approximately forty-three percent reported that the incentive sometimes applied.

the political process. By March of 1990, M-19 had voluntarily handed over its weapons and officially demobilized.[100] After this time, M-19 transitioned to a legal political party, called the M-19 Democratic Alliance, or AD M-19. An analysis of M-19's transition to a legal political party is included in the *Political Operations* section. For the purposes of this section, the discussion of motivation focuses on the second stage: participants' exit from the public component, AD M-19.[o] Notably, during the interviews, several participants described their struggle as existing on a continuum. M-19's disarmament was not a halt in the struggle for social justice and political reform but merely a transition of the means by which those objectives were achieved. A small number of insurgents, however, opted to continue the struggle in a splinter group of M-19, the Jamie Bateman Front. The splinter group is believed to be responsible for a number or armed attacks throughout Colombia.

Factors both internal and external to the group seem to have induced individuals to leave AD M-19. Many of the participants in the study felt profoundly that they did not matter to the party. Some indicated that they had not been given roles in the party or had not been invited to any regular party functions, such as meetings.[102] A similar number of participants reported having received little or no attention from AD M-19.[103] Some depicted the party as having been more concerned with attracting newcomers than with integrating former combatants. In part, these portrayals of AD M-19 reflect the overall weakness of the party as a cohesive political organization. Those members who were elected to seats in the Congress during the first election held in 1991 often developed their own agendas and campaign committees at the expense of the internal cohesion of the party.[104]

Other factors external to AD M-19 also led a number of former combatants to leave the party. Reinsertion to civilian life often places new demands on former insurgents. Most reinserts, as they are sometimes called, hold jobs, provide for families, and learn new skills. The demands of everyday life can refocus the reinserts on themselves as individuals rather than sublimating personal concerns to the needs of the guerrilla organization. Such demands leave little time for political work. In addition, participants holding government positions described feeling a sense of "cultural shock," overwhelmed by the reality of politics despite their many years of struggle to insert themselves in the political process. They felt ill-prepared to govern the nation. This insecurity was one of the reasons AD M-19 opted to make political alliances

[o] Although this focus is not ideal, the authors are limited by available data. This section is based on research that discusses the perspective of those who opted to leave AD M-19 (the public component), not the armed or underground component of the M-19 insurgency.[101]

with other organizations and bring in newcomers, which helped to further erode the cohesion of the party.[105] Lastly, the fear of violence from other armed groups also persuaded some participants to leave AD M-19 and political activities. Many former M-19 members, including AD M-19 presidential candidate Carlos Pizarro, were assassinated. The culprits of violence against the former insurgents included right-wing paramilitary groups, government security forces, and active insurgents who sought to legitimize their positions by murdering so-called "traitors" to the revolution.[106]

OPERATIONS

Paramilitary

Over the course of its history, M-19 perpetrated approximately 558 documented incidents, spanning from kidnappings and bombings of media outlets to more spectacular operations such as the disastrous siege of the Palace of Justice in 1985. The height of M-19 activity, as shown in Figure 8-6, was in the mid-1980s. Although M-19 made some inroads into the rural countryside, the insurgency gained most traction in urban areas. Of the 558 documented incidents, M-19 carried out forty-two percent of them in Colombia's three largest cities, Bogotá (Capital District Department), Cali (Valle de Cauca Department), and Medellín (Antioquia Department).

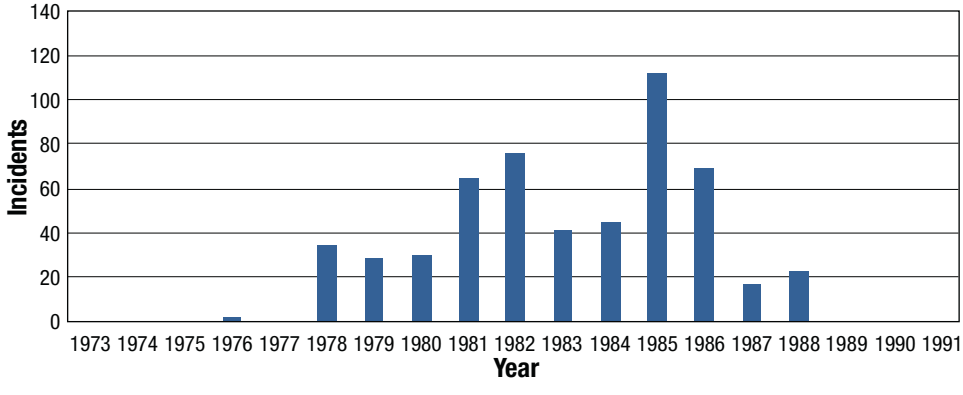

Figure 8-6. M-19 incidents over time.

M-19 used a number of different methods of attack,[p] but the group heavily favored simple armed assault and bombings/explosions. Of the

[p] The Global Terrorism Database tracks nine attack types: assassination, hijacking, kidnapping, barricade incident, bombing/explosion, facility/infrastructure attack, armed assault, unarmed assault, and unknown.[107]

total number of incidents, more than 216, or roughly thirty-nine percent, were armed assaults. M-19's second most common attack type was bombings/explosions, accounting for twenty-three percent[q] of total incidents the group perpetrated over several decades. Not surprisingly, the weapons M-19 most frequently used during its operations were firearms. Approximately fifty-four percent of its operations relied on firearms. The second most used weapons were explosives, bombs, and dynamite, accounting for about twenty-one percent of incidents in which M-19 used weapons.[108,r]

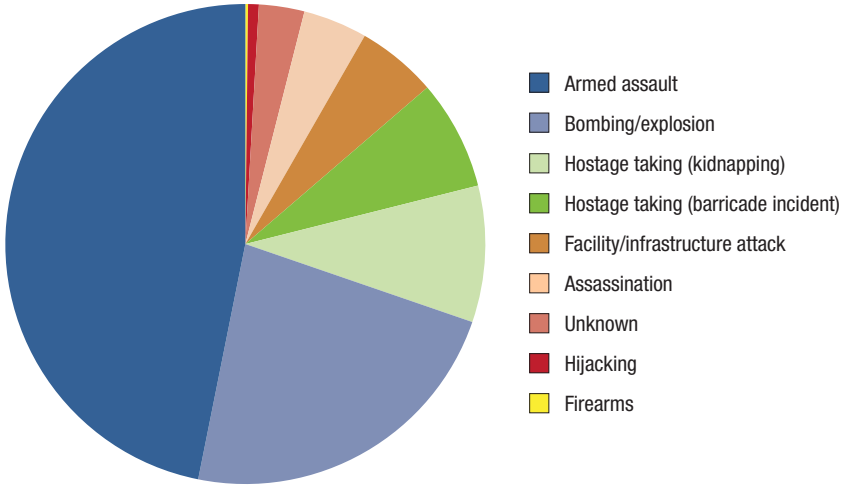

Figure 8-7. M-19 attack types.

M-19 attacked a variety of strategic targets throughout its history. As discussed above, although at times M-19 leadership favored a military strategy over a more explicitly political strategy, M-19 leaders mostly used the group's operations as armed propaganda, designed more to communicate and persuade than to defeat Colombia's security apparatus. The strategy is apparent when analyzing M-19's operations. Of the 558 incidents, only about thirty-five percent specifically targeted the

[q] Bombings/explosions: 127 of 558.

[r] The authors searched by perpetrator, M-19, and removed any incidents perpetrated after the 1991 cease-fire because these incidents are likely attributable to splinter groups, as M-19 officially demobilized and disarmed after the 1991 agreement.

military and police. Likewise, M-19 intentionally targeted the government[s] in relatively few of its operations, approximately eleven percent. The remainder of the targets included businesses (fourteen percent), private citizens and property (thirteen percent), transportation (eleven percent), and journalists/media (five percent), among others.[110,t] In some instances, M-19 attacked businesses, oftentimes those with connections to Western countries, especially the United States. At various times, M-19 bombed or assaulted offices of US businesses such as IBM, Coca Cola, General Electric, Houston Oil Company, Texas Instruments, and several others. The group also attacked several British companies, including Yardley Co. and a British Airways office. In addition, M-19 targeted individuals thought to be engaged in exploitative practices, such as company executives or landowners. Occasionally, M-19 took hostages during these operations, indicating that the motivation for these attacks was sometimes extortion to supplement the group's financial resources. The section below describes several of M-19's large-scale operations, including those not traditionally categorized as paramilitary, such as takeovers of embassies and government buildings.[u]

[s] The incidents cover the target types "government general" and "government diplomatic." Government general targets are defined as attacks on a "government building; government member, former members, including members of political parties in official capacities, their convoys, or events sponsored by political parties; political movements; or a government sponsored institutions where the attack is expressly carried out to harm the government . . . . This value includes attacks on judges, public attorneys (e.g., prosecutors), courts and court systems, politicians, royalty, head of state, government employees (unless police or military), election-related attacks, intelligence agencies and spies, or family members of government officials when the relationship is relevant to the motive of the attack." The targets categorized as government diplomatic include "attacks carried out against foreign missions, including embassies, consulates, etc."[109]

[t] The authors searched by perpetrator, M-19, and removed any incidents perpetrated after the 1991 cease-fire.

[u] Several smaller-scale operations specifically intended to ingratiate M-19 with sympathetic audiences are discussed in the *Legitimacy* section.

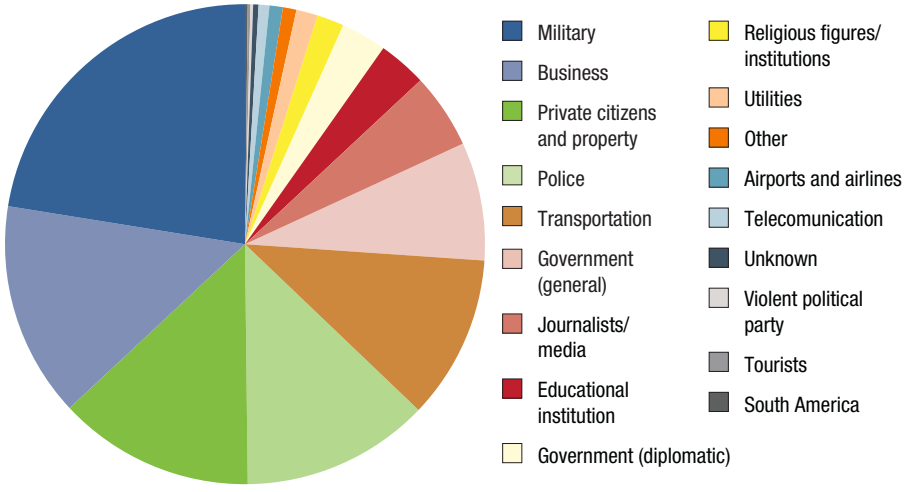

Figure 8-8. AUC target types.

M-19's first major operation, described in more detail above, was the theft of Simón Bolívar's sword. In the mid-1970s, many of M-19's activities supported its propaganda efforts and logistic requirements. In 1978, M-19 tunneled into a military depot from a nearby safe house, acquiring thousands of weapons. However, in retaliation, an embarrassed government undertook draconian countermeasures that nearly decimated the M-19 ranks, eventually leaving many in prison, including M-19 leader Jaime Bateman. Reportedly, the security forces made judicious use of torture in their persecution of the M-19. In the late 1970s, the M-19 also executed the first of several operations targeting foreign embassies in Bogotá. In 1979, a commando unit from Bogotá briefly took over the Nicaraguan embassy, ostensibly in support of the Sandinista insurgents.

The M-19 launched a formative operation in March 1980, the seizure of the Dominican embassy in Bogotá. Although the insurgents that executed the operation carried weapons, the sixty-one-day siege miraculously ended without any hostage deaths. One guerrilla, a young man, died in the initial siege of the embassy, as did an innocent bystander.[111] One M-19 operative who participated in the operation reported that the guerrillas did not have enough weapons to successfully defend the embassy, nor did they have the wherewithal to physically throw hostages from the windows to end their lives.[112] The insurgents, led by Rosemberg[v] Pabón, known as Commander One, were armed with automatic weapons and grenades. At least one of the insurgents wore a bullet-proof vest.[113]

[v] Pabón's first name is alternately listed as "Rosenberg" and "Rosemberg."

Figure 8-9. Rosemberg Pabón with another M-19 guerrilla in the Dominican Embassy Siege.

Despite the lack of significant casualties, the impact of the operation was far-reaching. Not only did operation solidify M-19's ties with Castro's Cuba, the M-19's negotiations with the Colombian government to release the hostages introduced the M-19 leadership to the strategic utility of negotiations. In an interview, a guerrilla participant noted that the conclusion of the siege illustrated, for the first time, the possibility of negotiated solutions with "no winners and no losers." It represented a "win" for the country as a whole.[114]

Figure 8-10. M-19 guerrilla celebrating the end of the Dominican Embassy siege.

Although the Colombian government ultimately did not grant the bulk of M-19's ransom demands, the insurgents reported feeling some sense of victory after the siege concluded. The M-19 leaders cited the successful negotiations as influential in the group's decision to adopt a political strategy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, eventually leading to the group's demobilization and disarmament.

The Dominican Embassy Takeover

The M-19 guerrillas stormed the Dominican embassy in Bogotá, with the intent of capturing and holding hostage high-ranking diplomatic personnel. A total of sixteen operatives participated in the operation. For a time, intelligence on the number of guerrillas in the embassy was confounded by the insurgents' tactic of assigning only odd numbers as monikers for each of the guerrillas.[115] Early media reports listed the number of operatives as high as thirty. One of the primary demands of the group was the release of 311 political prisoners held by the Colombian government, including M-19 operatives, in the La Picota penitentiary. Other objectives included denouncing the army's human rights violations, rejecting the military penal justice system, acquiring fifty million dollars in ransom, and achieving worldwide publication of M-19's grievances against the Colombian government.[116,117]

Planning for a takeover of an embassy might have begun as early as 1978, according to US and Colombian intelligence sources. The planning was resurrected after the capture and detention of M-19 commander Jaime Bateman. Shortly after hearing of Bateman's arrest, guerrilla strategists met to arrange his release, or at the very least, to avenge him. The planners of the siege had family connections with the government, the local business community, and foreign diplomats. M-19 decided to seize the Dominican embassy during celebrations of the Dominican Independence Day, which would draw a number of high-ranking foreign officials.[118] The operation also coincided with upcoming elections in Colombia. Ironically, the planning for the operation took place in Melgar, home to one of the Colombian army's counter-guerrilla units.[119]

After the ambassadors had assembled for the celebrations, M-19 operatives ran down the dead-end street that housed the Dominican embassy. The guerrillas had grouped into commando units, four apiece, and posed as athletes congregating after a game.[120] Pulling weapons from their sports satchels, the guerrillas ran over the guards at the entrance to the compound.[121] Security at the embassy was notably weak, and it was easy for the guerrillas to overcome security forces. Several

of the attending ambassadors did have bodyguard details that opened fire on the insurgents, killing one and wounding several others.[122,w]

In all, the guerrillas managed to capture seventy-five hostages, including fourteen ambassadors from the United States and several Latin American, European, and Middle Eastern countries, holding a handful of them for sixty-one days. The other hostages included additional diplomats, spouses, the papal nuncio, and employees of the embassy. M-19 eventually released most of the nondiplomatic staff and the female diplomats. For strategic reasons, M-19 assigned the negotiator role to a female guerrilla, La Chiqui.

Figure 8-11. La Chiqui, the female M-19 negotiator during the Dominican embassy siege.

Several of the diplomats being held hostage helped the guerrillas craft their written demands, softening the rhetorical tone that the guerrillas had originally adopted.[x] As stated before, the Turbay administration refused to meet most of M-19's demands, especially the release of the political prisoners. Although the administration publicly refused to meet the fifty-million-dollar ransom, some sources indicate that the M-19 did receive a ransom of some kind from the business community.[123]

[w] The Soviet bloc diplomats all left the festivities early, giving rise to suspicions, ultimately unfounded, that they were aware of the pending operation.

[x] See *Appendix B. M-19: The Guerrilla Position Paper and Our Revision* for copies of the letter the guerrillas originally wrote to state their demands to the Colombian government and the letter the diplomats revised that was actually sent as part of the negotiation process.

The final agreement reached by the negotiation team called for the release of the hostages and provisions for the guerrillas' safe transport to Cuba on a Cuban jetliner. The guerrillas traveled with eleven of the hostages to Cuba, where they were then safely released.[124] On the way to the airport, the guerrillas were greeted by crowds lining the streets, "waving white kerchiefs," in support of the guerrillas.[125] The operation garnered a great deal of publicity for M-19, another important victory for the guerrillas.

M-19's Invasion of Colombia

The holdover in Cuba proved fortuitous for the M-19 guerrillas. While there, they received military training, which many of the insurgents lacked, including training in military tactics and planning. In tandem with the Dominican embassy operation, Bateman and the M-19 leadership adopted a refined military strategy that sought to establish guerrilla zones, or focos, in the Colombian hinterlands, especially the rugged, jungle-covered Caquetá. In support of the strategy, M-19 leadership sent additional members to Cuba for further training.[126]

In part, the M-19 leadership's two-pronged urban and rural strategy was influenced by the successes of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1979. The Sandinistas also used this approach. The ransom M-19 received from its operation in the Dominican embassy operation financed the group's regeneration. The apex of Bateman's new strategy was an offensive that would land his guerrillas, led by Toledo Plata, in Colombia from the Pacific Ocean. Although he was sympathetic to M-19, and reportedly enamored with the charismatic, free-wheeling Bateman, Fidel Castro declined M-19's request to launch an invasion from Cuban territory. Bateman also had connections with influential actors in Panama, an occasional base for the group. He worked in conjunction with Panamanian General Omar Torrijos,[y] who eventually approved the use of Panamanian territory for M-19's Colombian invasion.

The plan called for two separate M-19 contingents, both launching from Panama. Toledo Plata's contingent of about one hundred fighters left Panama for the mouth of the Mira River on the Pacific. Their ship, the *Freddy*, evaded the Colombian navy, which expected any expeditions to be coming from Cuban territory. The second, smaller, contingent embarked from Panama City, arriving on the coast of the Chocó Department near Utria. This latter force met a band of hostile natives who had been terrorized by Colombian soldiers disguised as guerrillas. Many of the M-19 insurgents were killed by the natives in retaliation for

[y] Fidel Castro had previously brokered the introduction of Jaime Bateman Cayón and the Panamanian general.

the misattributed acts; those that survived scattered, and many of these survivors eventually surrendered to the army.[127]

It appears that both these contingents operated under ambiguous orders from the M-19 leadership. Toledo Plata interpreted his orders to establish a guerrilla zone in Chocó, while the leadership of the smaller contingent may have planned to march straight to the interior of the Caquetá to intercept Bateman and his forces, delivering his supplies and weapons.[128] Lacking military robustness, the invasion was an unmitigated disaster, displaying the group's ineptness outside of its urban environs.

The larger contingent, led by Toledo Plata, made a series of grievous tactical mistakes. After their arrival on the Mira River, the unit deposited their supplies on a sandy beach that was only accessible during the dry season. While the group camped nearby, a torrential downpour flooded the river, washing away a good deal of the group's supplies. M-19 also lacked local support in the region, creating logistical challenges for the units. However, they were able to occasionally acquire food, transportation, and navigation from local peasants. In addition, Toledo Plata's contingent carried only a small topographical map of the region, supplied by a crew member of the *Freddy*. No one in the unit had any intimate knowledge of the region or the route to Caquetá. Eventually trapped in a corner between the Mira River and Ecuador, the guerrillas needed to cross the river to the north and disappear into the highlands before being discovered by the army. Toledo Plata, a doctor by profession, first required his troops to rest to regain their strength. He estimated that the guerrillas, weakened by low morale, constant precipitation, malaria, and general misery, were in no condition to move farther.[129]

The Colombian army, however, had acquired intelligence of the guerrillas' position. The army sent patrols to the Mira. Toledo Plata, who reportedly confused the patrols for smugglers or curious onlookers, failed to break camp or put the guerrillas on high alert. When the army attacked the camp, the guerrillas initially mistook the soldiers for smugglers. Taken by surprise, the guerrillas split into two units, leaving most of their supplies behind. Those that managed to flee were burdened by heavy packs, dense vegetation, slippery mud, and oppressive heat. The army picked off the fleeing, exhausted guerrillas, eventually chasing them into Ecuador after a final firefight on March 12. One column surrendered to Colombian troops who they mistook for members of the Ecuadorian military. Another column surrendered to the Ecuadorian military, which promptly handed over its prisoners to the Colombian military.

The failed operation devastated the group's military capabilities and its leadership. The Colombian army captured Toledo Plata and Pabón, the infamous Commander One who spearheaded the Dominican embassy siege. The media reported the decisive government victory to have "crippled, if not broken" M-19. While the government defeated the group militarily, it clearly had not defeated the idea of M-19. The Colombian public watched the trials of the erstwhile guerrillas with rapt fascination. One political writer, speaking of the capture of the leaders, said, "what a shame," a refrain frequently repeated throughout a country dissatisfied with the closed democracy practiced by the National Front.[130]

Palace of Justice Siege

The paramilitary operations of the M-19 were punctuated by peace negotiations with different administrations. After the group's recovery from the disastrous invasion from Panama, M-19 leader Bateman entered into negotiations with President Betancur, who had taken office in 1982. Betancur adopted an amnesty program for guerrilla groups, but the negotiations bore little fruit. A year later, Bateman perished in a plane crash under mysterious circumstances. The M-19 leader was supposedly on his way to further negotiations with Betancur in Panama. Under Marino's leadership, the group adopted a more hard-line stance toward negotiations with the government, refusing negotiations unless the dialogue was with the president himself. Betancur did agree, meeting M-19 leaders in Spain and Mexico. The peace agreement that followed provided M-19 room to maneuver in urban areas, establishing peace camps (discussed in the *Underground and Auxiliary* section) that were a base for recruitment and indoctrination. Clashes with the military increased, eroding the peace agreement that ultimately failed to bring M-19 into the political process.[131] As the backdrop for its withdrawal from the peace process, M-19 cited the government's failure to uphold the truce provisions and initiate promised political reforms.[132] Notably, M-19 also violated the provisions of the truce as well.[133]

After the peace agreement with Betancur faded to irrelevance, M-19 frequently clashed with the military. Alongside these changes, M-19 also began to actively pursue its long-held dream of uniting leftist guerrillas under a single banner. The group established the Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera (CNG), or the National Guerrilla Coordinating Group and the America Battalion, the organization through which a cohesive leftist armed opposition was to take place. Before the coordination coalesced, however, M-19 undertook its most notorious mission, the siege of the Palace of Justice.

The November 1985 siege of the Palace of Justice was an extension of the failed 1984–1985 peace process with Betancur. Its failure stemmed not only from the government's failure to uphold key provisions but also from the M-19's use of peace as a tactic rather than an end goal. The peace camps set up by the group in numerous urban slums acted as bases for military training while the group was supposedly poised to disarm and demobilize. Not surprisingly, the security forces targeted the peace camps and M-19 representatives. The destructive dynamic precluded the success of the peace process. Under leadership of Álvaro Fayad, M-19 took the armed component to the limits; particularly notable is Fayad's emphasis on cultivating the "special forces." It was his special forces unit that executed the siege.[134]

During the siege, M-19 leadership hoped to secure a forum in which to put Betancur on trial for his failure to sign the peace accords. Undoubtedly, M-19 also hoped to quash the public perception of the group as a "spent" force. Although the Dominican embassy siege also relied on a hostage barricade, Betancur's response diverged widely from that of his predecessor. Turbay had opted to solve the hostage barricade incident at the Dominican embassy through negotiation. The Betancur administration, in stark contrast, gave the army the go-ahead to retake the building by whatever means necessary. The abject failure of M-19 to achieve any of its stated goals is due to the response Betancur adopted.[135]

The ill-fated decision left at least 115 dead. The events initiated a controversy that continues to this day. In 2010, the Colombian judicial system punished retired Colonel Alfonso Plazas Vega, the commander that led the assault on the Palace of Justice, with thirty years of imprisonment for his role in the alleged killing of "M-19 members and suspected collaborators *hors de combat* (outside of combat)," including the forced disappearance of eleven cafeteria workers.[136] The sentence followed a 2005–2006 Truth Commission, led by the Supreme Court, that investigated the events surrounding the siege.

The siege of the building began on November 6, 1985, and concluded the following day. Approximately thirty-five heavily armed M-19 guerrillas stormed the building, which was home to the Colombian Supreme Court. The guerrillas participating in the operation had trained in Libya, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Several M-19 members had already infiltrated the building by using their standings as bona fide lawyers to gain access. While entering the building, the guerrillas gunned down several security guards and bodyguards. M-19 leadership later claimed that the group did not intend to take hostages, but within minutes of entering the building, M-19 had already secured a number of hostages. Shortly thereafter, police opened fire on the guerrillas.[137]

By two p.m. that afternoon, the army began a planned assault to retake the building. In part, the military's attack was hastened by M-19 threats that they would start killing hostages if several high-ranking government officials did not present themselves to a senior M-19 leader for negotiation.[138] A total of 240 soldiers and fifteen commandos participated. In the twenty-eight-hour bloody battle that ensued, the M-19 had little opportunity to engage in the political action it initially planned. Approximately 315 people are believed to have been trapped in the building. At the conclusion of the siege, 115 were killed, including seventy hostages and forty-one guerrillas. The hostages killed in the attack included "11 magistrates of the 24-member Supreme Court, 3 auxiliary judges, 12 assistants to judges (all women), 1 auxiliary judge of the Council of the State, 2 Council of the State lawyer assistants, and 4 Council State auxiliaries (including 3 women)." The government forces suffered eleven fatalities and thirty-one wounded.[139] According to one historian, despite the heavy-handed measures taken by the government, "most Colombians actually approved of their government's forceful response, blamed the M-19 for having provoked it, and believed the Mafia sponsored the terrorist attack."[140] Nevertheless, the siege amounted to a national tragedy even in the already violence-ridden landscape of Colombia.[141]

The narrative of the siege—pieced together from witness testimony, media reports, embassy wires, and a host of other sources—contains several especially controversial components. The first involves the alleged *hors de combat* killing of M-19 members and suspected collaborators, especially the eleven cafeteria workers that went missing after the conclusion of the siege. Video footage of the government assault clearly shows several cafeteria workers being escorted from the building by security forces. However, the government repeatedly denied that the workers had been captured, claiming that they had died in the conflagration. Various sectors also implicated the Medellín Cartel as co-conspirators in the operation. According to these stories, Pablo Escobar paid M-19 an undisclosed sum, typically reported in the millions, to storm the palace in order to destroy the state's evidence against himself and other traffickers. Many documents were indeed destroyed in the ensuing fires (including incriminating evidence against M-19), but no source has definitively established a connection between the guerrillas and the cartel.[z] A final point of controversy is the purported collusion between the United States' Reagan administration and President Betancur, both working alongside the media, to lay a false trail accus-

[z] One academic notes what while "hard evidence is lacking, the circumstantial evidence is strong." The day M-19 stormed the Palace of Justice, the courts were to deliberate on the extraditions of traffickers to the United States.[142]

ing the M-19 guerrillas of executing the Supreme Court justices rather than laying the fault at the military's ineptness.[143,aa]

The M-19 did not seek to gain militaristic control of any area of Colombia, but rather each armed act had a strategic or political purpose. Additionally, the group's emphasis on urban attacks is clearly seen in Figure 8-12, with the highest concentration of attacks in Bogotá, Cali and Medellín.

Figure 8-12. M-19 area of influence.

[aa] For competing accounts of the Palace of the Justice siege, see Hudson.[144]

From Military to Political Strategy

The emphasis on military strategy continued in the aftermath of the Palace of Justice siege. In addition to forming the special forces units, Álvaro Fayad also developed urban-based militias while attempting to coordinate the unite the 15,000 armed leftist guerrillas. The urban units, formerly more oriented toward political action, increasingly adopted military logic, essentially forming urban militias. The urban militias then carried out larger-scale operations, such as the siege of army battalions in Armenia and Ipiales; military operations in Cali; and attacks against important government personnel, such as General Zamudio, commander of the military, and Minister of Internal Affairs Jaime Castro.[145] M-19 also took over a series of towns in its area of operations but never held territory for any period of time.[146]

The turn to an urban militia is most evident in the city of Cali. In 1985 and 1986, the city experienced a surge in politically motivated violence.[147,ab] Originally, M-19 had established its headquarters in nearby Yumbo but gradually moved to Cali. After the signing of the doomed peace accords in 1985, the urban militia there forcibly took Yumbo, sparking low-intensity violence in that municipality and in Cali. Afterward, M-19 founded its peace camps in Cali, which sometimes appeared to be military camps rather than peace camps. The civilian and security sectors unease with M-19's increasing military presence in the city culminated in an army offensive against M-19 in the Siloé neighborhood several days after the Palace of Justice siege. Although the initial offensive was successful, the authorities recognized the popular support the insurgents enjoyed in many areas of the city. Official security forces and private paramilitaries proceeded to sweep the area of "undesirable" elements (which included M-19) by using violence.[149] M-19's position in Cali deteriorated after the concerted attacks on its position there.

After the Palace of Justice siege, M-19 leadership also began to coordinate leftist guerrilla activity in Colombia. The group pursued the objective through bilateral means as well as through coordinating organizations. Bilaterally, M-19 ran training schools with the ELN; formed the Fuerza Conjunta EPL-M19 (Joint Force EPL-M19) and the Batallón America (Battalion America); and ran joint operations with the Quintín Lame group. As discussed above, M-19 also established the CNG and later the Simón Bolívar Coordinating Board. Although M-19 executed a number of operations with other guerillas under

[ab] Camacho uses the term *public*, rather than *political*, to distinguish between public and private violence. He describes public violence as acts perpetrated by individuals in the name of the "general social order," or motivated by the social order, and when the victims are targeted due to their "reputation, job, or social function."[148]

the auspices of various coordinating mechanisms, the efforts were ill fated. The joint guerrilla organizations made no significant military or political strategic decisions. The separate guerilla groups differed in terms of ideology and were fiercely protective of their identities and independence.[150]

M-19 leader Carlos Pizarro Leongómez likened the group's heavy military focus after the Palace of Justice siege to "crossing a desert." The Colombian public of the late 1980s was war weary. The first major mobilization for peace, the Movement for Life, took place in 1986 on the anniversary of the siege. Others followed, particularly in 1988 and 1989. Increasingly, the public no longer supported the idea of war or its aftereffects. Deftly taking the pulse of the public, M-19 began to seriously pursue the possibility of peace in the late 1980s.[ac]

During the late 1980s, as a group, M-19 underwent a series of transformative events that helped the leadership rethink an armed strategy for achieving its objectives. In 1988, M-19 members kidnapped Álvaro Gómez, a hard-line Conservative politician. Gómez had more or less made his political career by baiting and castigating any Conservative politicians that advocated negotiation with the leftist guerrilla groups. During the long months of his captivity, Gómez whiled away many nights discussing Colombia's problems with the guerrillas. Gómez and M-19 leadership found unexpected common ground during that time. After his release, Gómez and the political wing of M-19 allied together to press for a constitutional assembly.[151]

Administrative

Many of the early recruits, as well as later recruits, were targeted at Colombian universities. The universities acted as a sort of clandestine job fair for insurgent groups in Colombia, including M-19, the ELN, and the FARC. The university setting offered leftist recruiters ample opportunity to observe, interact with, and ultimately draw in sympathetic individuals. The recruitment process could last several years, and most recruits were unaware that they were being targeted for recruitment into clandestine organizations until very late in the process.

M-19 used a common risk-averse approach to recruitment by targeting individuals who were already politically active in legal organizations that had objectives and ideologies similar to those of the clandestine organization. Many of the original M-19 leaders (Jaime Bateman, Iván Marino Ospina, Luis Otero Cifuentes, Alvaro Fayad, Carlos Pizarro Leongómez, Augusto Lara Sánchez, and Rosemberg Pabón Pabón)[152]

[ac] This strategic about-face is further discussed in the *Political Operations* section.

belonged to the Juventudes Comunista (JUCO), or Communist Youth Movement, establishing a solid social network among the founding members. With the help of this existing network, the founding members later participated in the FARC, the ELN, and ANAPO.[ad] When recruiting members, M-19 drew heavily from various political and social student organizations that exhibited leftist sympathies. Recruiting from these organizations provided a ready pool of recruits with the appropriate ideological affinities but also decreased the likelihood that the individuals were covert agents.[153] The danger of infiltration by covert agents was a problem particularly after M-19 killed union leader José Mercado and after Operation Colombia, during which M-19 stole thousands of weapons from the Colombian army. The students were also "biographically available" for participation in a clandestine group. Most often, they lacked immediate familial duties and had sufficient time and resources to engage in clandestine activity.[154]

The recruitment process was typically slow. Known operatives carefully watched and vetted potential recruits, sometimes for as long as several years, before formally approaching them with invitations to join the clandestine organization. Often, the recruits were wholly unaware that they had been targeted for recruitment. One former M-19 insurgent reported that she was unwittingly courted by M-19 for nearly two years before receiving a formal invitation. At the time, she belonged to a leftist political student organization that engaged in legal protest activities. After she accepted the invitation to join, she discovered that the vast majority of her fellow compatriots in the student organization were in fact M-19 members. Before officially being accepted into the organization, recruits were also given assignments to test their mettle and value to the organization.[155]

M-19 received training from a variety of sources. The founding members, such as Bateman and Pizarro, had already received training as guerrillas active in the FARC and the ELN. Undoubtedly, the organizational training necessary to sustain a social movement was also derived from their participation in student activist groups. In 1978, after deciding to complement their urban operations with an armed rural component, M-19 leaders opened special training schools for the would-be rural organizers.[156] Former members of the underground also described receiving ad hoc training and indoctrination in various reading circles and meetings outside the city. Recruits received training in logistics, resource procurement, and basic weapons training.[157] During the peace negotiations of 1984–1985, M-19 established peace camps in urban slums that acted as safe havens for the group. While in

[ad] See *Leadership* section.

these peace camps, M-19 actively recruited and trained its members, a precursor to the failure of the peace process.

M-19's formal military training occurred in military schools of Cuba, Libya, Nicaragua, and other sympathetic countries. Military training in Cuba began in earnest in the aftermath of the Dominican embassy siege in 1980 when M-19 guerrillas were given safe passage to Cuba as part of the negotiated settlement that ended the hostage barricade. The Cubans instructed the insurgents in military tactics and planning:

> [Cuban] Military school trained us for combat. It molded us into willing soldiers and got us used to psychological pressure. It developed tactical skills on land, gave us tools to calculate dimensions by sight, put in order our operative processes for fulfilling a mission, taught us operational planning techniques and how to use necessary instruments.[158]

Other critical training included instruction in "adapting battlefields by engineering works such as trenches, pits, tunnels, vaults . . . and using tactical, operational and strategic communications, camouflage for infiltration operations, and mining for active defence operations."[159] The training also provided M-19 with less tangible benefits, such as general discipline, more refined ideological arguments, heroism, and solidarity.[160] M-19 actively shared its training and knowledge with other insurgent groups in Colombia, running joint training camps with the ELN, the El Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), or Popular Liberation Army, and Alfaro Vive.[161]

Bateman initiated the training in anticipation of an invasion of Colombia from Panamanian territory, described in the *Paramilitary Operations* section. However, after acquiring arms from various international arms bazaars, Bateman pulled many of his guerrillas from the training, mistakenly relying on firepower rather than sound training.[162] The invasion ended in disaster for M-19, displaying their ineptness to operate as a rural front.[ae]

In the mid-1980s, Libya also provided training to M-19. The group sent about seventy insurgents to North Africa to receive training in combat tactics and using war technology. The relationship between M-19 and its Libyan sponsors was problematic. While M-19 desired secrecy in its activities, the Libyans printed stories and pictures of the guerrillas in the local newspapers. Eventually, concerns over secrecy led the M-19 commanders in Libya to halt attendance at the class. The Libyan

[ae] See the *Paramilitary Operations* section for a description of M-19's basic tactical mistakes.

military also clearly expected reciprocity—the guerrillas' final exam was fighting alongside Libya in its border war with neighboring Chad.

According to a former insurgent who participated in the training, the cultural, linguistic, and technological gaps between M-19 and its Libyan trainers prevented the training from being overly effective. She described the first week of weapons training as "pathetic." The group did establish a communications training course there with the help of an Ecuadorian guerrilla radio technician.[163]

Psychological

In its inception, M-19 was an urban-based insurgent movement that relied more on theatrics than overwhelming firepower. Many of its operations focused on gaining publicity rather than achieving significant military victories.[164] Known for their "theatrical, freewheeling style,"[165] M-19 was especially adept at cleverly crafted symbolic operations. Two days before a four-month amnesty granted by President Turbay came to a conclusion, M-19 lobbed three sixty-millimeter training mortar shells into the grounds of the presidential palace in Bogotá. The show of derision was complemented by the twenty-hour kidnapping of Colombia's leading television star, talk show host Fernando Gonzalez Pacheco, in an effort to publicly air M-19's counterproposal to President Turbay's terms. Photographs published the next day showed Gonzalez conversing with Bateman over a drink. As one military officer noted, M-19 had a knack for "making the government look foolish."[166]

M-19 leaders were avant-garde propagandists, making use of "guerrilla marketing techniques" before the term was coined in 1984 by Conrad Levinson. In what can only be described as a masterful introduction into the bloody Colombian political landscape, M-19 announced its arrival with a series of mysterious newspaper advertisements that simply read, "Wait for M-19."[167] One former government official noted, "Nobody knew if it was something to clean your floors with, or cigarettes, or what."[168]

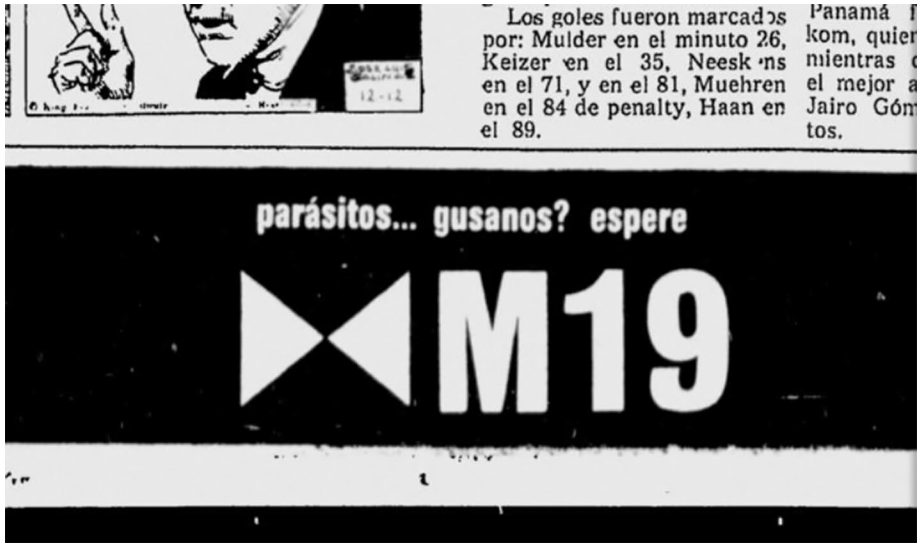
Los goles fueron marcados por: Mulder en el minuto 26, Keizer en el 35, Neeskens en el 71, y en el 81, Muehren en el 84 de penalty, Haan en el 89.
Panamá
kom, quien
mientras
el mejor a
Jairo Góm
tos.
parásitos... gusanos? espere
M19

Figure 8-13. M-19 newspaper advertisement announcing the arrival of the guerrillas. It reads, "Parasites . . . worms? Wait. M-19."

Political

M-19 was a remarkably political group. With some exceptions, M-19 leadership understood its military tactics in relationship to its political strategy. The group's political strategy was fundamentally defined during the seventh national conference. There, M-19 members defined their overarching political goal as a struggle for democracy, in sharp contrast with the FARC and the ELN, which advocated for a Socialist or Communist state.

Some of M-19's earliest political objectives reflected those of its first political wing, ANAPO. Among other ideas, M-19 advocated "the direct elections of governors, free education and socialized medicine, and agrarian reform."[169] However, its greatest concern remained opening the anemic democracy of the National Front to greater participation by common men and women.[170] Its paramilitary operations were usually undertaken with the understanding that the operations would achieve political goals, especially pressuring the government for more favorable negotiation terms: "The plan was the same was always: to take actions that would pressure the authorities for advantageous negotiations with the guerrillas. From the military trials, the prisons, and amnesty, we armed groups had gained an audience."[171]

Unlike some insurgent groups, which view participation in governing political institutions as a serious breach of their fundamental values, M-19 actively sought to insert itself into the political process. For instance, in November 1980, M-19 announced leader Bateman's

presidential candidacy. Periodically, M-19 also used media outlets, particularly TV and radio stations, to air its negotiation proposals to the authorities.[172] Likewise, the objective of the Palace of Justice siege was to use Colombia's judicial institutions to put President Betancur on "trial" for his failure to sign peace accords during the 1984–1985 negotiations.

These actions, and M-19's incorporation of nationalist rhetoric, illustrate the group's fundamental view of the Colombian state. While it agitated for serious structural reform to correct the closed democratic institutions of the National Front, M-19 still upheld the essential legitimacy of the state. By contrast, other insurgent groups, such as the ELN, disavowed most political activity within legitimate state institutions.[af]

Several factors internal to the organization influenced the group's decision to lay down its arms. As discussed earlier, M-19 adopted the struggle for democracy early in its career. That decision ensured a measure of ideological consistency when it opted to pursue legalization as a political party. A change in leadership in the mid-1980s also brought the charismatic Pizarro to the helm. He had a great deal of military credibility with his subordinates, bolstering his authority. It was his capabilities and vision as a leader that created the aperture for a wholly political strategy for the armed organization. Finally, the "dirty war" raging in Colombia, in which civilians bore the brunt of the guerrillas' struggle for justice, led to a notable dissonance between M-19's ends and the means by which it pursued them:

> A proliferation of new actors in the confrontation was leading to a violent dynamic in which it was no longer clear who the enemies were, what they were fighting for, and who was benefitting from the violence. The intensification of the war started affecting the civilian population in the areas under the control of guerrilla groups. It was unacceptable to harm those whom we were supposed to defend, intensifying the alienation of the people from politics—the very opposite of what M-19 hoped to achieve.[174]

This trend was aggravated by authoritarian trends within the guerilla groups themselves. The Ricardo Franco Frente, a FARC offshoot, systematically murdered 163 of its guerrillas in an internal purge in the mid-1980s. M-19 publicly condemned the actions. Internally, M-19 questioned the Frente's purported objectives, wondering how the group

[af] Also see Crossett and Newton on the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) case, where the IRA had long adopted a policy of abstentionism, or refusal to sit in legitimate political institutions. Sinn Féin and IRA members regularly ran for office but, when elected, would refuse the seat in protest against British occupation.[173]

could claim to be in pursuit of democracy while contributing to such gross abuses of human rights.[175]

Other external factors also facilitated M-19's transition to a wholly political strategy. Arguably one of the most crucial factors was the Barco administration's policies. His administration actively sought to alter state institutions to more adequately respond to Colombians' social and political grievances. A crucial first step was the administration's offer of constitutional reform as an initial conciliatory offer to the armed groups. This more democratic ethos in Colombia was buoyed by other democratic transitions in southern South America. Lastly, as discussed above, a social fatigue of war had beset the Colombian population.[176]

M-19's 1988 kidnapping of Álvaro Gómez afforded the group an opportunity to jump-start the transition to a political strategy. Gómez was a former presidential candidate and representative of the ruling elite. While holding Gómez prisoner, the M-19 leadership began to contemplate the possibility of initiating negotiations with the government. During his captivity, Gómez had extensive dialogue with M-19 leaders regarding Colombia's problems. Gómez became an unlikely ally after his release, aligning with M-19 in pushing for a constituent assembly to reform the country's outdated constitution.[177] Pizarro, the M-19 leader at the time, offered to both release Gómez and disarm and demobilize M-19 if the government would commit to deep structural reforms. The Barcas administration responded positively to Pizarro's overture.[178]

The subsequent peace negotiations were marred by several acts of violence, including the assassination of Liberal presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán and the murder of Carlos Pizarro in 1990. M-19 steadfastly refused to abandon the peace process, even amid the failure of the government to adequately protect M-19 members. During the negotiations, M-19 insisted on three "rectifications" that later became the building blocks for the Pacto Pólitico por la Paz y la Democracia (Political Pact for Peace and Democracy), signed on November 2, 1989:

1. A new constitution
2. Respect for human rights
3. A national social and economic plan to ensure peace and prosperity for all[179]

The signing of the pact was preceded by M-19's decision to lay down its arms, cemented at its tenth national conference in October 1989. True to form, M-19 came to a consensus on disarmament through a democratic vote. Of the 230 M-19 members in attendance, 227 voted in favor of laying down their arms.[180]

At that moment, M-19 began the transition to a political party whose primary instrument was the ballot, not bullets. In March of

the following year, the M-19 became the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD M-19) after absorbing other demobilized guerillas from the EPL, the Quintín Lame, and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia (PRT), or Workers Revolutionary Party of Colombia, after to the peace accords that ended those groups' armed struggles.[181]

Figure 8-14. Flag of AD M-19.

AD M-19's influence on the constitutional reform process significantly altered the future trajectory of the Colombian government. However, as a political party, AD M-19 was largely a failure. In its slogans, the group touted itself as "more than a party" and presented itself as political alternative to the traditional Conservative and Liberal parties.[182] Pizarro wanted a space for the "nonconformists." In this regard, statistics were on Pizarro's side. AD M-19 came in first place in a 1988 survey asking the public to select its most favored guerrilla group.

However, AD M-19 proved inept at the business of building a political party.[183] One researcher identified several key variables crucial to establishing a durable political party. Of those factors internal to the party, one is the presence of an "ideologue," or leader, who commits resources to building a party from the ground up, with a staunch local base of support at the grassroots level. AD M-19 had such an ideologue in the leader Pizarro. Unfortunately for the party, the paramilitaries assassinated him in 1990. Antonio Navarro Wolff took over where Pizarro left off, but his leadership was "pragmatic," characterized more by concern with electoral competition than development of grassroots support.[184]

Navarro took over leadership of AD M-19 before the group's first election, which would select the officials that would attend the Constituent

Assembly, the forum charged with developing constitutional reforms it would present to the Colombian Congress for a vote. The election was a rousing success for the new party. The party fielded a diverse candidate list that garnered 26.75 percent (992,613 votes) of the vote. AD M-19 won nineteen seats in the seventy-seat forum, second only to the Liberal party, which won twenty-five seats. During the reform process, which took place between February and July 1991 in Bogotá, AD M-19 played a critical role in designing the new constitution that Congress adopted that year. Party reform was the critical element of the party's platform. AD M-19 succeeded in implementing substantial changes "to statutes governing candidate registration, financing, and legal recognition."[185]

After some initial successes at the polls, AD M-19 clearly faltered. In its first congressional election, the party captured nine percent of the vote, granting them a total of nine senators and thirteen representatives in Congress. Several years later, the party garnered a fraction of those votes, granting them only one representative in Congress. The party fared similarly in local elections.

Table 8-1. AD M-19 national elections results.

Election Date	Type	Percentage of vote	Representatives elected
May 27, 1990	Presidential	12.5	0
September 12, 1990	Constituent Assembly	27.3	19 of 70 seats
October 27, 1991	Congressional	9.0	9 senators, 13 representatives
March 13, 1994	Congressional	2.7	1 representative
May 29, 1994	Presidential	2.8	0

Based on a table included in Mauricio García Durán, Loewenherz, Vera Grabe, and Otty Patiño Hormaza, *The M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*, Berghof Transitions Series no. 1 (Berlin: Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008), http://www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/documents/publications/transitions_m19.pdf, 30.

Several critical factors contributed to the failure of AD M-19 to consolidate as a political force in the country. Internal political divisions, accompanied and compounded by Navarro's pragmatic leadership style, and finally political decisions made by the group all impacted the implosion of AD M-19. The group discovered that building a political party was not as simple as grafting existing military structures onto a new frame. The skills gained during the armed struggle had not adequately prepared the guerrillas for their newfound political roles.

At the end of the day, AD M-19 was not successful in translating the local support it cultivated as a guerrilla organization into support for its political project.[186]

Internal rifts, exacerbated by Navarro's pragmatic leadership style, decreased the staying power of the party. After 1992, AD M-19 was no longer running unified candidate lists; instead the group fielded individual candidates. The decision reflected internal divisions within the party itself. A sharp decline in votes, from nearly one million in 1990 to less than half that a year later, led to finger pointing and blame. Divisions over the party's vision for the future continued to fracture over the course of the next several years. The problem was exacerbated by Navarro's coalition-building tactics that had increased the reach of the party in elections. The coalitions led to some short-term electoral victories but left the party with little internal coherence.[187]

Navarro's "obsession" with coalition building came at the expense of cultivating a solid local support base necessary to sustain a political movement long term. This trend is reflected in the area of operations for the group—the party stationed itself primarily in Bogotá, not in the smaller cities and the countryside. When the party did develop an eight-plank platform in 1993, Navarro seemed too ready to compromise the principles to gain new coalition allies capable of defeating the Liberal party. Despite its efforts to revive a local base of support in 1994, AD M-19 became more or less irrelevant in Colombian politics.[188] Individual former guerillas, however, such as Navarro, have continued their involvement in Colombian politics, and several of former guerrillas continue to serve in local and national government seats. In 2008, Navarro was elected to the governorship of the Nariño Department.

Other political decisions also negatively impacted the legitimacy of the party. After the 1990 elections, the Gaviria administration offered the Health Ministry post to AD M-19. Navarro briefly accepted the post before turning it over to another AD M-19 member. However, the Gaviria administration adopted belligerent and unpopular policies, such as a neoliberal economic program that gutted social justice programs, and took a hard-line stance against the remaining guerrilla groups during peace talks. By 1992, after Gaviria had opted to renew the offensive against the guerrillas, AD M-19 had withdrawn from the government. However, AD M-19's association with the administration had tarnished their reputation.[189]

EXTERNAL ACTORS AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

On numerous occasions, M-19 attempted to unite the various leftist guerrilla organizations operating in Colombia and neighboring countries in Latin America. Their efforts met limited success. In the mid-1980s, M-19, along with guerrillas from Ecuador and other regional countries, established the Americas Battalion. The group is thought to have had as many as 400 to 500 members at one time. The Americas Battalion engaged in a series of confrontations with the armed forces in northwestern Colombia.[190] M-19 prisoners captured after a botched 1981 land invasion admitted to being trained in Cuba and receiving weapons from Panama.[191]

FINANCES, LOGISTICS, AND SUSTAINMENT

M-19 relied on various revenue streams throughout its history to maintain the viability of the organization. Early on, the movement struggled to fund training expenses and propaganda, as well as to secure the means to neutralize the violence of the Colombian state. Like many insurgent movements, M-19 turned to criminal activity to supply needed resources. In 1973 and 1974, M-19 operatives robbed a series of banks.[192] Other recorded incidents included a 1984 train robbery during which M-19 members boarded a train carrying hundreds of tourists near Bogotá. The guerrillas shot and wounded two policeman after demanding that the engineer stop the train. Tourists on board were stripped and robbed of their valuables.[193]

One of the group's primary revenue streams was from the "recovery" of so-called "people's funds" from wealthy Colombians and foreign corporations. In plain terms, this meant kidnapping targeted individuals or corporations and collecting ransoms. M-19 targeted the American-owned Sears, Roebuck & Co. in one of its earliest kidnappings. Several insurgents stormed the home of Donald Cooper, a Sears executive living in Bogotá at the time.[194] After detaining Cooper for six months, M-19 released him, reportedly for a one-million-dollar ransom paid by Sears. These kidnappings became fairly common early in M-19's career.[195] M-19 acquired most of its funds through ransoms paid to the group for the return of kidnapped individuals. Only rarely did the group receive "a dollar here or a dollar there" from international allies such as Libya or Cuba. Occasionally, M-19 briefly took over small towns, acquiring funds from local institutions and individuals, but this activity provided only "pocket money" for the guerrillas.[196]

Eventually, the group suffered from its financial successes, ushering in an unfortunate era in Colombian history that linked paramilitary groups and drug cartels. Hoping to acquire the cash necessary to fund a rural-based insurgency, Bateman opted to target the rich and powerful drug-trafficking families.[197] M-19's initial foray into kidnapping the traffickers highlighted the group's exceedingly poor intelligence capabilities. A contact from Bogotá suggested a target to M-19, one wealthy enough to ensure a hefty ransom—Pablo Escobar. Upon his capture, Escobar, already a powerful, dangerous man, convinced his captors to release him, giving the group another target, this time the Ochoa family. After being released, Escobar apparently contacted the Ochoa family to give them the identity of the group that captured their relative.[198] M-19 abducted Marta Nieves Ochoa, one of five sisters of the powerful Ochoa drug-running family, from a university campus outside of Medellín. In addition to targeting Escobar and the Ochoas, M-19 also kidnapped the three small children of drug trafficker Carlos Jader Alvárez, demanding a five-million-dollar ransom. Using his contacts, Alvárez extracted information regarding M-19 from law enforcement officials. Acting on the intelligence, Alvárez scooped up anyone, mostly university students, known to be connected or sympathetic to the group.

The reaction of the community of trafficking families helped to cement nascent cartels, as well as link paramilitary groups with the drug-trafficking syndicates. The abduction of the Alvárez and Ochoa children prompted a gathering of concerned drug-trafficking families in 1981 in Cali. During the historic meeting, the families formed a vigilante group, Muerte a Secuestradores (MAS), or Death to Kidnappers. MAS was one of the first paramilitary organizations to form in response to leftist guerrillas that emerged after La Violencia. The purpose of MAS was to recover abductees and punish kidnappers. Each family represented at the meeting donated to the MAS war chest.[ag] Recalling the meeting, Escobar, one of the key attendees, said the families contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars, along with cars, motorcycles, airplanes, and even a submarine. Some of the funds went to pay for information that law enforcement had on M-19. Soon after, in Esocbar's words, M-19 "began to fall." MAS captured M-19 members and tortured them for information regarding the locations of the kidnapping victims and the perpetrators of the crimes. Colombian security officials, already smarting from previous M-19 antics, also applied pressure to M-19.

[ag] Some argue that this first cooperative arrangement between the region's drug-trafficking families helped to spawn the drug cartels—in this case, the Medellín Cartel.[199]

MAS hired a plane to fly over a soccer stadium during a playoff game, dropping leaflets to announce its formation. The vigilantes threatened to "hang kidnappers from trees in the public parks or shoot them and mark their bodies with the insignia MAS and a cross." If the kidnappers themselves were unavailable, MAS promised to deliver retribution to the perpetrators' families. The drug kingpins also promised a $200,000 reward for any information leading to the capture of kidnappers. It did not take long for the body count to pile up after MAS distributed the leaflets. Within the first six weeks, MAS had rounded up one hundred M-19 members.[200] Press reports attributed the capture of Elvencio Ruiz Gomez, M-19's second in command, to MAS. Gomez had reportedly masterminded a plan to abduct a wealthy businessman's daughter.[201]

The incident altered the relationship between the drug cartels and M-19. M-19 leadership had seriously underestimated the consequences of their kidnapping tactics: "They were like adolescents on a joyride."[202] Bowing to pressure brought to bear by MAS, which captured, tortured, or killed dozens of M-19 members, M-19 released Nieves. In revenge for the killings of its members, M-19 later murdered the three Alvárez children, an accusation the group tried, unconvincingly, to deny.[203] It is unclear whether the Ochoa patriarch, Fabio, paid the requested one-million-dollar ransom for the release of his daughter. One account, possibly apocryphal, says the offended patriarch soon thereafter purchased a thoroughbred racehorse worth more than $500,000. The horse, aptly named Ransom, was displayed in the public eye whenever possible.[ah]

Less fantastic, however, is the mercenary relationship that developed between leftist guerrilla groups, including M-19, and the drug cartels after the incident. To seal the "truce" between the traffickers and the guerrillas, M-19 leader Iván Marino Ospina and Pablo Escobar met. At the meeting, Marino gave Escobar a Soviet submachine gun as a token of the guerrillas' pledge to never target trafficking families again.[205,ai] Later, Colombian authorities would discover a number of weapons caches destined for M-19 on vessels owned by the Medellín Cartel. Rather than paying M-19 and other kidnappers' ransom, the cartels agreed to transport weapons for the groups in return for "amnesty from kidnappings, assistance in guarding remote jungle laboratories and permission to traffic cocaine through Colombian territory." The extent and duration of the relationship of convenience between M-19 and the powerful drug cartels is still unclear. Years later, the cartels formed Asociación Campesina de Ganaderos y Agricultores del

[ah] Other accounts suggest that Nieves's release was facilitated by Manuel Noriega and Fidel Castro.[204]

[ai] Another source indicates that the truce between M-19 and the drug traffickers was brokered by Panama's Manuel Noriega.[206]

Magdalena Medio (ACDEGAM), or Association of Middle Magdalena Ranchers and Farmers, a MAS successor, which spent several decades systematically exterminating guerrillas and their sympathizers.[207]

In addition to its illicit activities, M-19 pursued legal financial streams. M-19 leadership encouraged several of its members to pursue opportunities in private entrepreneurship. The individuals set up a medical equipment distribution company that provided the organizations with a regular stream of income for a number of years. Produmedicos, as the firm was called, earned approximately $5,300 each month but also allowed leaders to obtain easy credit as needed.[208] Likewise, Bateman legally invested the one-million-dollar ransom collected from the kidnapping of Sears executive Donald Cooper. The investment produced a steady stream of income that funded M-19's 1978 raid on a military weapons depot in Bogotá, described below.[209]

Just as the group had a multiplicity of revenue streams, M-19 also acquired weapons from a variety of sources. As discussed above in the *Underground and Auxiliary* section, M-19's underground often stole weapons piecemeal in urban centers it they operated. Acquiring weapons sufficient to confront the Colombian military was difficult, if not impossible. Instead, Bateman chose to target a weapons depot of the military itself. After extensive intelligence gathering and planning, M-19 dug an underground 264-foot tunnel from a safe house it rented to the facilities storing the weapons cache in Bogotá, called the Blue Whale. On New Year's Eve 1979, while the officers recovered from the celebrations, M-19 operatives absconded with thousands of weapons. Embarrassed by being caught flat-footed, the Colombian security forces launched a concerted campaign against the group, arresting dozens of members, including several leaders. The military's concerted retribution seriously hampered M-19's capabilities. The army recovered most of the weapons.[210]

M-19 also enjoyed the support of several international benefactors, including Cuba, Libya, and Nicaragua, which helped arm the group. Bateman, the M-19 leader, used his connections with a close Cuban friend, Jaime Guillot Lara, to facilitate the transfer of arms to the group. Guillot was also indicted on drug trafficking to the United States. According to the US Drug Enforcement Agency, Cuba's complicity in Guillot's trafficking activities helped the latter acquire the hard currency necessary to support leftist revolutionaries in Latin America, including those of his friend, Jaime Bateman.[211] Libya's dictator at the time,[212] General Qadhafi, also supplied M-19 with much-needed arms. M-19 leader Bateman personally traveled to Libya to meet with the dictator. In mid-1983, Brazilian authorities intercepted a Libyan cargo plane en route to Nicaragua after a technical fault forced the plan to

land there. The authorities discovered a sizable cache of weapons destined for M-19 in the hold.

Transport of supplies in Colombia's rough terrain also proved challenging. In 1981, M-19 successfully hijacked a cargo plane in northwestern Colombia, using the plane to transport five tons of arms and ammunition to its new area of operations in the jungles of the Caquetá Department. The military sent army patrols to investigate the downed plane, which had been crash-landed in a river. M-19 fighters ambushed the patrol with machine gun fire and rockets. Several soldiers were killed over the course of a dozen firefights. M-19 fighters also captured several journalists who traveled to the site of the hijacked plane. The reporters were forced to march with the guerrilla columns. After identifying two of the reporters as "infiltrators," the unit commander ordered their execution. The remaining reporters captured the shootings on film. Eventually, M-19 released the remaining reporters and the crew of the hijacked plane.[213]

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CHAPTER 9.

AUTODEFENSAS UNIDAS DE COLOMBIA (AUC)

TIMELINE

1849	Conservative and Liberal Parties are founded.
1899–1903	"The War of the Thousand Days"—120,000 people die in civil war between Liberals and Conservatives.
1946 (–1965)	La Violencia ("The Violence"), a localized civil war characterized by widespread violence between Liberal and Conservatives in the countryside. The conflict resulted in the deaths of 180,000–300,000 Colombians.
April 9, 1948	Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala is assassinated in Bogotá. The assassin is killed on the spot and the Bogotazo riot ensues.
1949	Conservative Party candidate Laureano Gómez Castro wins the presidential election. Colombian Communist Party introduces "mass self-defense" as means for peasants to protect themselves from armed Conservatives.
June 1, 1953	President Gomez is deposed by a military coup. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla becomes the new president of Colombia.
May 1, 1957	President Rojas resigns under the pressure of Liberals and Conservatives united under a combined political entity called the "National Front."
1958	Conservatives and Liberals agree to form the National Front, a power-sharing agreement, in a bid to end civil war.
August 7, 1958	The first National Front president, Alberto Lleras Carmago, takes office.
August 1962	President Leon Valencia Munoz is inaugurated.
1970	National People's alliance is formed as a left-wing counterweight to the National Front.
1978	President Turbay begins intense fight against drug traffickers.
August 1982	President Belisario Betancur Cuartas is inaugurated. During his inaugural speech, he announces that the Colombian government will engage in peace negotiations with leftist guerrillas.
November 18, 1982	President Betancur signs Congressional Law 35, granting general amnesty to all guerrilla combatants.
May 28, 1984	Cease-fire begins under the Aribe Agreement.
1986	Right-wing paramilitary groups begin a murder campaign against UP politicians.
August 1990	President César Gaviria Trujillo is inaugurated.

1993	Pablo Escobar is killed.
August 1994	President Ernesto Samper Pizano is inaugurated.
April 1997	The far-right paramilitary groups unite under the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) to combat left-leaning FARC and ELN.
August 1998	President Andres Pastrana Arango is inaugurated.
2000	US Congress appropriates 1.3 billion dollars for Plan Colombia. Total appropriation through 2005 would reach 4.5 billion dollars.
August 2002	President Alvaro Uribe Vélez is inaugurated.
April 2003	The Uribe administration is able to modify the Colombian constitution to allow government forces to make arrests without warrants.
December 2003	More than 31,000 AUC members agree to demobilize. An additional 15,800 insurgents from AUC, FARC, and ELN eventually voluntarily demobilize.
July 2004	AUC and government begin peace talks.
2004	Plan Patriota is introduced by Uribe, with the aim of establishing a permanent military presence in rebel-held territory.
2006	The majority of AUC blocks are demobilized.
February 2006	US and Colombia reach a free trade deal (eventually passed in 2011).
March 1, 2008	Raúl Reyes is killed in his stronghold in Ecuador during a Colombian cross-border attack.
March 7, 2008	Iván Ríos, the youngest member of the secretariat, is assassinated by his chief of security, Rojas.
October 2009	Colombia and the United States sign deal giving US military access to seven Colombian military bases.

ORIGINS OF THE AUC

The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia—AUC) was an umbrella organization for Colombia's semiautonomous right-wing paramilitary groups. Although the AUC was officially formed in 1997, like many of Colombia's paramilitary groups, its origins date back to the 1950s when wealthy landowners and cattle ranchers hired militia groups to enhance their physical security and protect their property interests. After La Violencia, there was a rise in leftist guerrilla movements. These groups often had roots in Marxist-Leninist ideology, with the espoused goal of violent revolutionary

change.[1] With large landholdings and significant wealth, these rural elites were concerned with the growth of the guerrillas and, in turn, enlisted militias as protective forces.

Recognizing the militias' efficacy, Colombia's early paramilitary groups received both tacit and active political and military support. This support was largely due to the fact that the paramilitary groups and the Colombian government shared a common enemy in the leftist guerrillas who sought advancement of economic and rural land reform agendas and, ultimately, the violent overthrow of the Colombian state. In the 1960s, the Colombian government took steps to legally permit the existence of these paramilitary groups; Presidential Decree 3398 and Law 48 allowed for the "creation of civil defense organizations" to protect against the activities of leftist guerrillas.[2] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the military continued its role in setting up and supporting such forces.

> A series of military operational manuals issued in the 1960s encouraged the creation of paramilitary structures. In 1969, the Reglamento de EJC 3-10, Reservado, de 1969, EJC-3 Order, Restricted, 1969, stated that the armed forces should organize "self-defence committees" which "are a military-type organization made up of civilian personnel in the combat zone, which are trained and equipped to undertake operations against guerrilla groups that threaten an area or to operate in coordination with combat troops." The Colombian military's efforts were facilitated and supported by "local political and economic elites, particularly landowners and agro-industrialists, at best tolerated and at worst supported the creation of civilian "self-defence" groups by the army. The justification for this support was that such self-defence groups were needed to prevent the guerrilla from extorting local businesses—enforced through kidnapping—in areas where there was little or no armed state presence. In many areas, paramilitary structures were created by the army at the behest of and with financing from local landowners.[3]

The Colombian military's support of paramilitaries, known locally as self-defense groups (in Spanish, *autodefensas*) was a key component of its counterinsurgency strategy in fighting leftist guerrilla movements. In addition to the growing role that the state played in the creation and support of self-defense groups, the main constituencies of these groups remained landowners, cattle ranchers, and, increasingly, drug cartels.

As the spoils of the illegal drug trade became apparent to leaders of these groups in the 1980s, their involvement in narcotrafficking increased,[4] and the more enterprising paramilitaries began aggressively competing in the illicit drug market.[5] The Castaño brothers, leaders of the fearsome Las Tangas group (which would later go on to become the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá [Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá—ACCU], the primary self-defense group of the AUC) were heavily involved in narcotrafficking. In 1998, the Castaño brothers made an astute move that would help cement their ascendancy toward leading the AUC: "the brothers Castaño started buying land in Córdoba, Urabá, southeast Antioquia, and the Viejo Caldas, and amassed a fortune mostly through extortion and narcotrafficking."[6] Richani goes on to conclude that the Castaño's "links first with the Medellín Cartel and then with that of Cali consolidated their linkages with narcotraffickers."[7] Such linkages between the self-defense groups and the illicit drug industry were not uncommon. Despite these links, the Colombian government continued their support of the self-defense groups. For example, "in 1987 . . . then Minister of Defense, General Refael [*sic*] Samudio affirmed the . . . defense of the paramilitary groups by saying 'that the civil communities of autodefense are legitimate if these communities are organized to defend their property and lives.'[8] For decades, the self-defense groups would be supported by the powerful military and political institutions of the Colombian state under the justification of legitimate self-defense from the guerrilla threat.

By the 1990s, the cartel system was unraveling. Even though the major paramilitary groups had ceased long ago being simply the hired hands of the cartel kingpins, when the cartels fell in the 1990s, these groups moved to cement their positions as major players in the narcotrafficking business. Smaller-scale drug producers began to proliferate, and with these "baby cartels" came a dramatic increase in violence, pitting leftist guerrillas against right-wing paramilitaries as both vied for control over the illegal drug market.

An increase in the paramilitaries' attacks against not only leftists such as labor leaders, once a staple target of the groups, but also against government officials led then President Barco "to declare the creation of paramilitary groups illegal in April 1989."[9,10] The illegality of the paramilitaries was short lived. In the early 1990s, President César Gaviria issued Decree 356, which again legalized self-defense groups. Proponents of the re-legalization of the *autodefensas* argued that the groups would operate under the model of neighborhood watch groups, performing a kind of benign surveillance function. As Tate reports, "this decree was the basis for the [government's] creation of the CONVIVIR, or paramilitaries, which were officially launched through

Resolution 368 in 1995."[11] The ostensive purpose of the CONVIVIR, Community Rural Surveillance Associations, was surveillance, increased intelligence sharing with the government, and provision of public security. Ultimately, the CONVIVIR decree helped cement the relationships between the government and the major paramilitary groups.

The paramilitaries' use of widespread terrorist violence, drug trafficking, and massacres of civilians led to increased scrutiny of the state's support of CONVIVIR, and in 1997, the CONVIVIR program was officially declared unconstitutional by Colombia's Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, the Colombian state's long history of tacit and direct support for paramilitaries was a significant contributing factor in the origins and growth of paramilitaries in Colombia in general and the AUC in particular.

In 1994, the paramilitary groups convened their first national summit, the National Conference of Self-Defense Groups, with the aim of creating a modicum of unity in the groups' conduct and political programs. Despite these goals, the groups continued to maintain regional and local foci and "lacked a unified command structure and an articulated antisubversive national strategy."[12] After the summit, the groups continued to strengthen their alliances and relationships among each other and with "narcotraffickers, landed oligarchy, agribusiness groups, cattle ranchers, conservative political leaders and sectors of the military."[13] The same year, Fidel Castaño was killed in a guerrilla ambush, and Carlos became head of the ACCU. Carlos Castaño quickly moved to increase the strength of the organization, and in 1997, under the leadership of Carlos, the AUC was formed.

In summary, the origins of the AUC can be largely attributed to the rise of revolutionary guerrilla movements in the 1950s and 1960s, the emergence of narcotrafficking, and the tacit and overt support of the Colombian state.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMAND AND CONTROL

Organizational Structure

Although the AUC was not a vertically hierarchical group, members were partially answerable and somewhat subordinate to the AUC's core leadership group—the central command. The central command consisted of twenty-one leaders who represented both the AUC's constituent self-defense groups and independent self-defense groups.[14] The central command was responsible for developing and coordinating the overall political, ideological, and strategic objectives of the AUC membership.

Under the central command were four main organizational units, which were not always organized according to vertical hierarchy; their hierarchy was sometimes determined simply by size. From largest to smallest were the self-defense groups, blocs, fronts, and groups. This organizational structure was standardized and largely shared throughout the AUC's membership.[15] The self-defense groups were typically divided into political and military wings. In this respect, the AUC's organizational structure closely resembled those of Colombia's guerrilla movements, although the sizes of the blocs and fronts generally were comparatively smaller.[16]

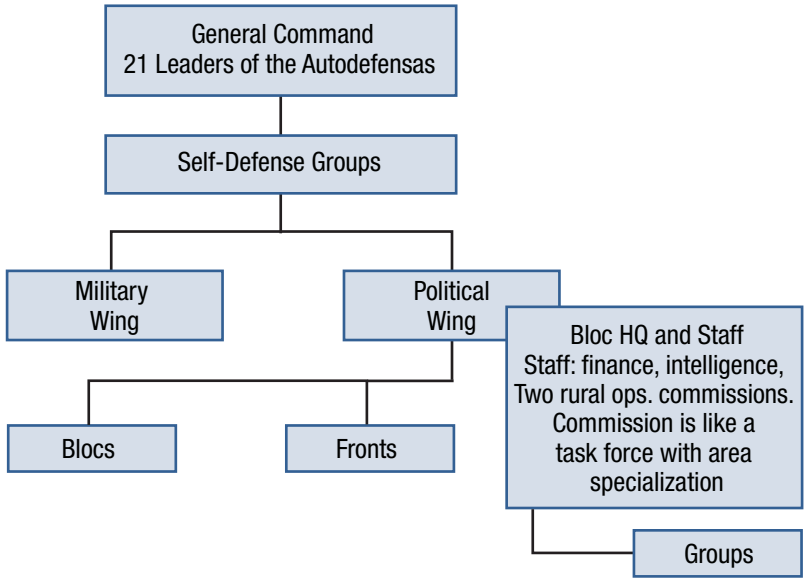

Figure 9-1. AUC organizational structure.

The organizational model of the individual self-defense groups generally consisted of the following leadership structure: The self-defense group was headed by a general commander who immediately oversaw a central staff and was responsible for operational control and for overseeing the various blocs, fronts, and groups in his zone of control. A bloc was typically led by a bloc area commander or, in the absence of this position, a military commander who was in charge of operations. In addition to having a military commander, many of the blocs also had a political commander whose function was to ensure internal morale and to act as an external liaison between the bloc, members of the public, and public institutions. The blocs were organized into a headquarters, usually staffed by a finance manager, intelligence agent, and members of a task force who specialized in single areas. Blocs typically consisted of more than 300 individuals.

The AUC further divided blocs into fronts, although some fronts existed independently of any bloc. Fronts typically ranged between 100 and 300 individuals and, not unlike blocs, each front had a commander. Groups were similarly arranged and comprised approximately seventy-five people.[17]

The structure and organization of the most prominent of the self-defense groups, the ACCU, demonstrates the general organizational model of the AUC's self-defense groups. According to a US Defense Intelligence Agency report, the ACCU consisted of "a Central Staff, five blocs, a mobile school [this is an armed rapid response mobile unit], and one front. A security force of approximately 500 combatants protects Castaño (the leader) and his staff."[18] Although the ACCU was one of the most important self-defense groups, its organizational structure is demonstrative of the AUC's high level of organization, transforming it from a collection of disparate militias to a partially unified force with clear command and control.

The year 1981 would prove to be seminal in the evolution and growth of the AUC. That year, FARC members kidnapped Jesus Castaño, father of Fidel, Carlos, and Vicente (the three brothers who would later go on to found and lead the AUC), demanding a ransom that far exceeded the modest net worth of the Castaño estate. When the Castaño children failed to produce the full sum, Jesus was tied to a tree, beaten, and left to die.[19] Carlos and Fidel vowed revenge and joined a small, local antiguerrilla militia.[20] Shortly after the death of Jesus, Carlos and Fidel founded the group Las Tangas, named after Fidel's estate, to avenge the death of their father.

During this period, Colombia's paramilitary groups grew in power and number. As the country's illegal drug trade exploded, the paramilitaries grew increasingly entwined in the illicit drug business.[21] With Fidel at the helm, the Castaño brothers turned to the cocaine trade. Fidel rose through the ranks of the Escobar Cartel, amassing considerable wealth and power along the way. When the cartels began to openly war against each other in the early 1990s, a number of paramilitary leaders broke away from Escobar. Although for reasons not totally known, it was around this time that Fidel too had a falling out with Escobar. It was reported that Escobar murdered some top associates at a meeting Fidel was supposed to attend, leading Fidel to believe that his absence at the meeting spared his life.[22] After the murders, Escobar then sent assassins to wipe out the dead men's organizations. Fidel, in turn, founded Los PEPES (People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar), an anti-Escobar group funded by the rival Cali Cartel and working in close concert with Colombian military and intelligence. The group fed the

military information about Escobar in return for leniency on the Cali Cartel and its associates.

After Escobar was killed by a police sniper in 1993, Los PEPES was disbanded. Fidel, along with Carlos, returned to Córdoba, where the two continued to hunt FARC guerrillas. When Fidel was killed in a 1994 battle with FARC guerrillas, Carlos inherited the leadership of Las Tangas. The same year, Carlos would transform the group into the ACCU. The ACCU would grow to become one of the strongest and most effective of Colombia's paramilitary groups, eventually serving as the predecessor for the AUC, and from which Carlos Castaño would emerge as the head.

Castaño was an excellent political tactician—good at building an organization and effective at combating guerrillas. "By the end of 1996, the Accu had done the impossible: driven the rebels out of Urabá. Invitations were pouring in from Farc [*sic*]-held areas across the country for the Castaños to mobilise their paramilitary army. The idea of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) was born—a new nationwide federation of right-wing vigilante groups dedicated to fighting the rebels."[23] In 1997, Carlos formed the AUC as the umbrella group for the regional, semiautonomous paramilitaries. While the AUC's member groups retained some autonomy and still functioned largely at the regional level, the AUC's central command consolidated control and centralized the groups' strategic decision making.[24] Under Carlos's leadership, the group grew considerably and "by 2001, most sources suggest the AUC had between 8,000 and 10,000 armed combatants with a presence in approximately 40 percent of Colombia's municipalities."[25] This number would almost triple by the time of the AUC's disarmament in 2006.

Ideologically, the AUC "defined themselves as an anticommunist advance guard in 'defense of private property and free enterprise,' and they offered their security model to owners and businessmen in areas plundered by the guerrillas. They [saw] themselves as a 'civilian self-defense organization,' compelled to protect themselves, given 'the state's abandonment' of its security duties towards proprietors."[26] Not only did the AUC target guerrilla movements, but it also targeted perceived sympathizers and allies of the guerrillas, including journalists and human rights advocates who spoke out against the AUC. The AUC sought to stamp out any and all opposition. This activity led the United States to designate the AUC as a foreign terrorist organization on September 10, 2001.[27] Then Secretary of State Colin Powell articulated the US motivation for the designation:

The AUC has carried out numerous acts of terrorism, including the massacre of hundreds of civilians, the forced displacement of entire

villages, and the kidnapping of political figures to force recognition of AUC demands. Last year, AUC members reportedly committed at least 75 massacres that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. Many of these massacres were designed to terrorize and intimidate local populations so the AUC could gain control of those areas. The AUC has also committed hundreds of kidnappings, including the abduction of seven Colombian congressional representatives in November of last year.[28]

It is beyond dispute that the AUC was engaged in the perpetration of widespread atrocities. But unlike FARC, the AUC did not seek the state's overthrow. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the AUC's criminal activity and use of widespread violence was a threat to Colombia's domestic stability. The AUC eroded the state's capacity to extend law and order to all sectors of society and all geographic areas, seriously challenging the state's monopoly on the use of force.

From the time of the AUC's inception, Castaño sought to achieve political legitimacy for the group. It was a natural evolution, as it would allow the paramilitaries a seat at the negotiating table when the government turned to talks of peace. The AUC began demobilization in 2003, under the framework of the Santa Fe de Ralito Accord. The accord, subsequently codified in 2005 under the Justice and Peace Law, committed the group to a cease-fire, disarmament, and reintegration into Colombian society.[29,30] Castaño was killed in 2004 in the middle of negotiations; Colombian authorities recovered his body in a shallow grave in 2006.[31] By that time, approximately 31,000 individuals sought to participate in the Desarme, Desmovilización y Reinserción (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, or DDR) program.[32,a]

Despite the large number of people who sought to participate in the DDR program, and the conclusion that much of the AUC had been effectively demobilized, some signs indicate that former members of the AUC have reorganized themselves into armed groups who continue to engage in violence and illegal activities. Some of these groups, such as the Black Eagles (Águilas Negras), have openly asserted the ideological and political motivations of the AUC and adopted their violent paramilitary tactics and strategies. Others function more clearly as criminal narcotraffickers. Both are known in Colombia as *bacrim* (or BACRIM), short for *bandas criminales* (criminal gangs). It remains to be

[a] It is important to note that the DDR program's approach to human rights abuses and drug trafficking has proved controversial. For example, see Amnesty International's criticism[33] and an article in the *New York Times*.[34] In 2009, the DDR program was restructured to emphasize deradicalization and psychological rehabilitation to prevent recidivism. As a result, the program was renamed the Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (Disarm, Demobilize, and Reintegration) program, highlighting the reintegration of fighters into normal society as opposed to mere insertion.

seen if these are neo-AUC splinter groups forming another period of the group's evolution and growth.

In conclusion, we can track the AUC's evolution from the early state-sponsored counterinsurgency and self-defense groups of the 1950s–1970s through the rise of the cartels, for which AUC members acted as hired militias and private armies for narcotraffickers. In the wake of the fall of the big cartels, the AUC would coalesce into an organization of antiguerrilla self-defense groups with leadership comprising key narcotraffickers. Throughout its history, in its pursuit of wealth, power, and territory, the AUC would perpetrate numerous atrocities and massacres, eventually earning the group designation as a terrorist organization by several Western governments. Finally, under Castaño's leadership, the AUC would embark on a quest for recognition as a legitimate political actor, eventually leading to an officially demobilized force.

Leadership

The AUC functioned as the umbrella group for Colombia's right-wing paramilitary self-defense groups, which were divided by geographic region. Under the AUC structure, member groups remained semiautonomous, retaining varying degrees of political, social, economic, and military control over their areas of operations. Archival web analysis indicates that the AUC included among its members the following seven self-defense groups:[b]

1. The ACCU, the largest and most powerful group
2. The Mountain Self-Defense Group (Autodefensas de la Sierra), located on Colombia's northern coast
3. The Southern César Self-Defense Group (Autodefensas del Sur del César)
4. The Tolima Self-Defense Group (Autodefensas del Tolima)
5. The Puerto Boyacá Self-Defense Group (Autodefensas de Puerto Boyacá)

[b] It is important to note that while there is some consensus on the structure and membership of the AUC, scholars and organizations continue to disagree over what constitutes the exact composition of the AUC's membership. For example, the AUC's now defunct website recognizes the above membership list, but at the time of disarmament, many more self-defense groups and blocs came forward. This may be a result of power disputes in which the AUC leadership sought to exclude given groups from their organizational charts or evidence of the prevalence of autonomous self-defense groups that were not subordinate to the AUC's central command. The list provided herein relies on the membership lists as found in several authoritative sources.[35,36,37,38,39] These lists have been cross-referenced, and the product is a "consensus" membership list.

6. Self-Defense Group of Ramón Isaza (Autodefensas de Ramón Isaza), located in the middle-Magdalena region
7. The Cundinamarca Self-Defense Group (Autodefensas de Cundinamarca)

Figure 9-2. Map of departments of Colombia.

The AUC was led by a central command, which was populated by individuals who represented both the AUC's constituent self-defense groups and some independent groups.[40] The central command was

responsible for developing and coordinating the overall political, ideological, and strategic objectives of the AUC membership. The AUC's leadership was divided into both political and military wings, a feature shared by the AUC's self-defense groups.

Under the central command were four main organizational units, which were not always organized according to vertical hierarchy; their hierarchy was sometimes determined simply by size. From largest to smallest were the self-defense groups, blocs, fronts, and groups. This organizational structure was generally standardized throughout the AUC's membership.[41]

The key leadership of the AUC varied over time. The group was plagued by violence and infighting, making it prone to instability and sudden leadership change. The backgrounds of the key principals varied with respect to geographic origins and social strata. The educational levels of leaders also ranged from dropouts who failed to complete even primary school to those possessing university degrees. Those in key leadership positions included individuals from humble rural backgrounds and also landowners, cattle ranchers, narcotraffickers, former guerrillas, and former members of the Colombian military. The principal head of the AUC was Carlos Castaño. After his death in 2004, Salvatore Mancuso, long Castaño's second-in-command, assumed the position.

The early paramilitary leadership of the 1960s was more homogeneous than today's AUC leaders. The early leadership comprised members of various sectors of the military and individuals hailing from "those societal sectors who were interested in maintaining the status quo, such as the young elite."[42] These constituents were bolstered by smaller landholders who sought to directly protect their property and increase security by forming independent militias. These militias were often engaged in counterinsurgency operations with Colombian military forces. This early leadership component was important because it advanced the anti-Communist, antiguerrilla ideology that would form the basis of the self-defense groups that would later constitute the AUC. This ideology, and the leadership who espoused it, could marshal the manpower and garner public support from members of the middle and upper classes of rural Colombia.

By the late 1980s, the groups that would later go on to constitute the AUC drew their leadership from paramilitaries associated with narcotrafficking, emerald gangs, landed elites, and cattle ranchers.[43,44] Despite the huge amounts of wealth that supported them, many of the AUC's leaders came from humble backgrounds. The Castaño brothers (Carlos, Fidel, and Vicente), for example, were three of twelve children that were raised on a farm and came from a lower-middle-class

background. Hernán Giraldo Serna, a major player in the AUC and leader of the Sierra Nevada Self-Defense Group, never completed elementary school, grew up tending livestock, and picked coffee before rising through the ranks of paramilitary leadership.[45] Others, such as eventual AUC leader Salvatore Mancuso, attended university and came from a wealthy family. The geographic roots of the leadership were generally rural but later drew from urban areas as the AUC expanded. The leadership shared a right-wing ideology that was intent on eradicating left-wing political, civilian, and guerrilla elements from Colombia as well as enforcing traditional Catholic values in the towns they controlled: they enforced a ban on miniskirts and public disorder, as well as a strict curfew.

Fidel Castaño Gil

Fidel Castaño's early life was similar to those of his brothers Carlos and Vicente.[c] Fidel was born in 1951 in Amalfi, Antioquia. In the late 1970s, Fidel met Pablo Escobar and quickly became a "key member of the cartel."[47] Fueled by profits made through his work with the Escobar Cartel, Fidel began consolidating land holdings in Córdoba and amassing a small personal army. In 1981, Fidel's father was murdered by FARC guerrillas. After this formative event, Fidel volunteered for a local militia and collaborated with the Colombian army's Bomboná Battalion in Puerto Berrío, Antioquia.[48] During this period, Fidel gained valuable counterinsurgency training, and after leaving the local militia, Fidel put the training to use in the operations of his newly created group, Las Tangas. Ruthless and effective, the force grew, and Fidel deepened his relationship with Escobar. Fidel's split with Escobar in the early 1990s caused him to create the anti-Escobar group, Los PEPES. After Escobar's death, Fidel returned to Córdoba and continued to battle leftist guerrillas for control of territory and share of the narcotrafficking market. Fidel was known for his entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen and is reported to have engaged in the sale and trade of fine art, even living in Paris at one point.[49,50] Known as "Rambo" for his willingness to fight on the front lines, in 1994, Fidel was killed in a battle with FARC guerrillas.

Carlos Castaño Gil

Carlos Castaño, along with his brother Fidel, was one of the founders of the ACCU and later became the head of the AUC. One of twelve children, eight boys and four girls, Carlos was born in the Antioquia Department in 1965. Carlos and his siblings lived a modest childhood,

[c] For an overview of Fidel's life from his own perspective, see *Semana*.[46]

engaged in dairy farming and cheese selling, with the proceeds of the latter used to fund their education.[51] In 1981, the FARC kidnapped Carlos's father, Jesus, and later killed him. Carlos and Fidel vowed revenge and founded the antiguerrilla group Las Tangas. This group later became the ACCU, of which Carlos was the leader, and in 1997, Carlos formed the AUC. Carlos eventually resigned as the AUC's military commander, assuming political leadership of the group, although it is believed that he continued to lead overall operations, both political and military. Carlos was known as intelligent and charismatic, possessing good political instincts. He sought to gain political legitimacy for the AUC, working toward encouraging the Colombian government to recognize the AUC as a political group, not just a criminal syndicate. Castaño's demobilization negotiations with the government caused a rift among AUC leadership, and in 2004, Castaño was murdered; Colombian authorities recovered his body in a shallow grave in 2006.[52] Carlos's brother Vicente was later convicted of the murder.

José R Castaño ("El Profe")

José Vicente Castaño (also known as "El Profe," the Professor) was born in 1957. He is reported to speak with a prominent stutter and to have "none of the charisma of Fidel and Carlos."[53] For years, little was known about Vicente's involvement in the organization, as he avoided media and public attention. At the time of his brother Fidel's death, Vicente began to take a larger role in the AUC. Vicente became influential in the AUC, handling finances, logistics, and strategic expansion. Although he never commanded his own bloc or men, he was known for his strategic acumen and good relations with AUC commanders. His strategic intellect and financial management earned him the nickname "the Professor." One of Vicente's primary innovations was instituting a paramilitary training school focused on teaching military, political, and social strategies.[54] For this task, Vicente enlisted Fidel's former head of security, Carlos Mauricio García Fernández (commonly known as Rodrigo), a former army captain and known as a brilliant military tactician. Vicente was indicted in the United States in 2005 for conspiracy and money laundering. In 2011, Vicente was sentenced in absentia to forty years in prison for the kidnapping and murder of his brother Carlos. As of 2013, Vicente's whereabouts are unknown.

Salvatore Mancuso Gómez ("Triple Cero")

Salvatore Mancuso (also known as "Triple Cero," Triple Zero) served as the AUC's second-in-command under Carlos Castaño. After Castaño's murder, Mancuso assumed the leadership of the AUC's political division, subsequently leading peace negotiations with the Uribe

administration. The son of an Italian immigrant and a Colombian mother, Mancuso was born in the department of Córdoba in 1964. Mancuso is well educated, having studied civil engineering and, later, English at the University of Pittsburgh. After several years as a successful landowner, Mancuso joined the AUC as a means for retaliation against left-wing guerrilla violence and extortion.[55] After the AUC's demobilization, Mancuso was imprisoned in Colombia. In 2008, Mancuso was extradited to the United States, where he was convicted on charges of drug trafficking. Mancuso has continued to communicate from the Northern Neck Regional Jail in Warsaw, Virginia, particularly on matters concerning peace and demobilization. Mancuso has claimed that many sectors of the Colombian state were involved in the paramilitaries' activities.[d] Mancuso also claims to have met with former President Uribe in 2006 to discuss how the AUC could help his reelection efforts.[56] In 2012, Mancuso wrote a letter to President Santos suggesting that he could be a part of the peace negotiations with FARC.

Rodrigo Tovar Pupo ("Jorge 40")

Rodrigo Tovar Pupo (also known as "Jorge 40") led the Northern Bloc of AUC and demobilized in March 2006. Although Pupo was the lead spokesman during the Santa Fe de Ralito meetings, he and his men were the last of the AUC to demobilize. The son of a retired army officer, Pupo became acquainted with Salvatore Mancuso while attending college in Bogotá. In an effort to recruit Pupo to join the AUC, partly hoping that he could recruit members of other prominent families, Carlos Castaño and Salvatore Mancuso arranged a meeting with him.[57] It was decided that Pupo would be given command of the powerful Northern Bloc. Pupo was ambitious and sought aggressively to expand the bloc. This leadership style, and the inevitable encroachment on other blocs' zones of control, led to friction and violence with Hernán Giraldo, leader of the Autodefensas de la Sierra. Like many AUC leaders, Pupo was convicted in Colombia for his crimes and later extradited to the United States on drug trafficking charges. Pupo is perhaps most known for helping to trigger the Parapolitical Scandal when his laptop was seized in 2006. The computer held details of the AUC's involvement with politicians and Colombian security forces.

Hernán Giraldo Serna ("El Patrón")

Hernán Giraldo Serna (also known as "El Patrón") led the Self-Defense Group of the Mountains (Autodefensas de la Sierra) and was

[d] Much of this communication is done through interviews with the media and, while imprisoned in Colombia, through his own personal website, http://www.salvatoremancuso.com/ppal.php.

born on August 16, 1948, in San Bartolomé, Caldas. Serna spent his childhood engaged in agriculture and the raising of livestock and is reported to have never finished primary school.[58] In the late 1960s, Serna relocated to the Sierra Nevada, and in the 1980s, he formed the paramilitary group Los Chamizos, which merged with the AUC in 1999.[59] Serna and his group were infamous for using ruthless violence in the pursuit of the huge amounts of wealth available in the trafficking of cocaine. Serna, a hard-drinking mustachioed man, was known for his group's kidnappings, the use of chain saws to dismember opponents, and his ability to elude authorities in the Sierra Nevada.[60] Serna is linked to hundreds of murders and numerous kidnappings. He is accused of raping at least nineteen women, including girls as young as twelve.[61] Fearing extradition, Serna initially refused demobilization but later relented. His group demobilized in 2006. On May 13, 2008, Serna was extradited to the United States, where he faces charges of drug trafficking.

Jose Miguel Arroyave Ruiz ("Arcángel")

Born in 1954 in Amalfi, Antioquia, Miguel Arroyave (also known as "Arcángel") was a prominent AUC leader who commanded the Centaurs Bloc. It is believed that Arroyave, friend of the Castaños since childhood, purchased the bloc for approximately seven million dollars.[62] The bloc included such prominent areas as Casanare and Bogotá; its primary sources of funding were through narcotrafficking and extortive "taxes" on the regions' cattle ranchers.[63] Arroyave and the Centaurs Bloc became known for the vicious "war" fought against the Orientales Llanos, a rival self-defense group with overlapping and competing interests in territory and the illegal drug trade. The feud led to more than one thousand battle-related deaths.[64] Arroyave was a key leader in the demobilization negotiations between the AUC and the government. In 2004, Arroyave was killed by two of his men in an assassination that was ordered by a rival narcotrafficker, Daniel "El Loco" Barrera. Barrera sought to consolidate his territorial control, particularly over the Bogotá region.

Ramón Isaza

Ramón Isaza, leader of the eponymously named self-defense group, was born in 1940 in Antioquia. The Isaza group's area of control was the Middle Magdalena region. Isaza's paramilitary involvement began in 1978, when he organized and helped arm farmers in his region. Under the persuasion of Carlos Castaño, Isaza joined the AUC. For the Isaza clan, paramilitarism was a family affair; six of Ramón's eight sons were commanders in the AUC. Known by the nom de guerre El

Viejo (the "Old Man") for his age, Isaza was "sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment for killings committed in May 2003, and was separately sentenced to another 20 years of imprisonment for killings and abductions committed in April 2002."[65] Isaza is currently serving his sentence in La Picota prison.

Luis Eduardo Cifuentes Águila ("El Águila")

Luis Eduardo Cifuentes (also known as "El Águila," the Eagle) was born in 1960 in England. An early member of the Colombian Communist Youth (JUCO), Cifuentes went on to train with the AUC, attending the group's paramilitary school.[66] Ultimately, Cifuentes commanded the Self-Defense Group of Cundinamarca for nearly two decades. The Eagle is notable for negotiating a nonaggression pact with the FARC. The pact dissolved in 1990 after the FARC killed twelve of Cifuentes's men.[67] Under the Justice and Peace Law, Cifuentes confessed to perpetrating more than a dozen murders. Cifuentes is currently imprisoned in La Pillory.

Command and Control

Positions and duties were clearly delineated within the AUC's organizational units. Former combatants who underwent the disarmament process reported that command and control positions included bloc area commanders, political commanders, and counterinsurgency commanders. In addition to the direct combat personnel positions of the self-defense groups, several staff positions also comprised the various blocs and fronts. These positions included such personnel as financial managers, equipment and logistics personnel, gunsmiths, and nurses.[68]

COMPONENTS OF THE INSURGENCY

Underground and Auxiliary

The underground and auxiliary components of the AUC were deeply intertwined and constituted important elements of the group's growth and efficacy. The paramilitaries' enlistment and use of civilians as both underground members and as armed auxiliary forces has a long and complicated history. After the period of La Violencia and the founding of FARC in the 1960s, the Colombian military began a close relationship with the United States. Both countries shared an interest in halting the spread of Colombia's leftist guerrillas, a goal that comported with the United States' broader desire to eradicate leftist groups

sympathetic to Communist ideals more generally.[e] The backbone of Plan LAZO, the US-Colombia counterinsurgency plan, called for close collaboration between Colombian military officials and members of the US military in the pursuit of combating the guerrilla threat. As Human Rights Watch notes:

> U.S. advisors proposed that the United States "select civilian and military personnel for clandestine training in resistance operations in case they are needed later." Led by Gen. William P. Yarborough, the team further recommended that this structure "be used to perform counter-agent and counter-propaganda functions and as necessary execute paramilitary, sabotage and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents. It should be backed by the United States."[70]

As we can see from General Yarborough's assessment, a key aspect of the plan's counterinsurgency strategy relied on the training and use of civilian assets.

Plan LAZO called for training that consisted of two main aims: "1) combat the [leftist guerrilla] insurgency and 2) monitor and gather intelligence on the rebels, their civilian supporters, and social organizations by establishing networks throughout the country."[71] Such networks included unarmed underground components that could provide intelligence, ideological, and financial support. The underground comprised individuals such as cattle ranchers and landed elite, as well as "army reservists, retired officers predisposed to a fierce anticommunism, and men familiar with local residents, customs, and terrain."[72] The latter group "would be armed and trained by the army and provide troops with intelligence and logistical help, like guides; assist in psychological operations; and even fight alongside regular soldiers."[73] The early days of the paramilitaries relied on state-sanctioned support and training, and the state, in turn, relied on the nascent paramilitary leadership to cultivate an effective and robust underground. A decisive event in the use of civilians as auxiliary forces was when it moved from military doctrine to open state policy, "the government promulgated Decree 3398—which became permanent with Law 48 in 1968—which allowed the military to create groups of armed civilians to carry out joint counter-insurgency operations."[74] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the military continued its involvement in instituting auxiliary forces in the form of self-defense groups (see the *Origins of the AUC* section).

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[e] For a discussion of Plan LAZO, the paramilitary-state connection, and how it related to broader US geo-strategic interests, see Maullin.[69]

With the explosion of the drug trade in the 1980s, the primary constituencies lending underground support expanded to include "large-scale landowners, cattle ranchers, mining entrepreneurs (particularly those in the emerald business), and narco-lords."[75] These new groups of support for the paramilitaries increasingly intertwined the underground support with direct arming and auxiliary support of the paramilitaries. These new sources of revenue and support led to an increase in underground collaboration. Some paramilitaries were known to have teamed up with cattle ranchers and devised a strategy to deepen the underground by strengthening relationships between the self-defense groups and farmers, peasants, and local businessmen. For example, in the Middle Magdalena region, this collaboration resulted in the creation of more than thirty anti-Communist schools.[76] The ranchers' properties also served as a convenient hub for the storage of arms, and the ranchers themselves were reliable conduits for the dissemination of propaganda.[77]

Years later, "the ACCU [the predecessor organization to the AUC headed by the Castaño brothers] organized a sophisticated communication network in the region, linking approximately a thousand cattle ranches and plantations, whose administrators became permanent watch men, reporting to the police, the army, and Castaño's headquarters."[78] This network was bolstered by the longtime involvement of the Colombian military in establishing rural and urban intelligence networks.[79] Given Castaño's influence and deep connections, the group was able to build a sophisticated network of communications and intelligence. When the AUC was created in 1997, and the Castaños took the helm, their power and influence was clear. Support from the underground swelled. For example, "Castaño's solid support in Córdoba was demonstrated in early 1997, when 75 cattle ranchers from the Sinu area sent a letter to the defense minister, protesting the government's offer of a US$ 500,000 reward in exchange for information concerning Castaño's whereabouts."[80] The 1990s also signaled a period in which Carlos Castaño would build legitimacy; a key element of this strategy involved growing the underground component by creating foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that worked to distribute land.[81]

Armed Component

The armed component of the AUC dates back to the creation of the paramilitaries, government-supported and -sanctioned "self-defense" groups, and later, the CONVIVIR.[f] Precise figures of the size of the AUC's combatants are elusive. Some estimates approximate that, as of

[f] As Tate notes, "members of Convivir were authorized to carry sophisticated offensive-combat weapons, including mini-Uzi machine guns, repeating rifles and revolvers."[82]

2001, the AUC's armed component was as small as 5,000–7,000 combatants.[83] Others suggest that the AUC had a force of 8,000 combatants at the height of its power;[84,85,86] and still others estimate that the force ranged between "8,000 and 10,000 armed combatants with a presence in approximately 40 percent of Colombia's municipalities."[87] A 2002 estimate even put the number as high as 12,000.[88] Tate's analysis of the US Department of State's estimates of the size of AUC is indicative of the difficulty that surrounds such figures.[89] As found in several years of the *Patterns of Global Terrorism* report (that is, after the AUC was added to the United States' list of terrorist groups), the estimates vary widely. For example, the 2001–2002 report estimates 6,000–8,150 combatants. In 2003, the numbers jumped to between 8,000 and 11,000 (with an uncounted number of underground and ideological supporters), and finally, a 2005 report notes that more than 20,000 paramilitary members had demobilized, and 10,000 more were expected to undergo the process.

Figure 9-3. AUC flag.

It is difficult to determine why there were so few reliable estimates of the AUC's size. One reason that could account for the discrepancy between many estimates and the size of the AUC at the time of demobilization is that during the demobilization period, the AUC purposefully inflated its numbers in an attempt to facilitate the appearance of having a larger armed component then it in reality possessed. Some reports indicate that AUC leadership paid military-aged men and peasants to take part in demobilization and disarmament. PBS reported that "evidence obtained from one paramilitary commander's laptop computer proved that many of the 'demobilized paramilitaries' were actually peasants recruited as stand-ins, not actual combatants."[90] Evidence

suggests that the AUC's numbers at the time of demobilization were not truly reflective of the actual size of the group's armed component.[g]

Even if the AUC attempted to overcount its armed members, the variations in year-to-year estimates, especially in estimates of the group's strength before disarmament, indicate a linear growth under the leadership of Castaño. Rochlin notes that shortly after its creation, the AUC was "distinguished by the most rapid military growth of any Colombian subversive group in the 1990s."[92] This rapid growth of first the ACCU, and then later the AUC, is noted by Richani: "the paramilitaries counted only several hundred (according to the Ministry of Defense, the ACCU counted 93 men in 1986) during their first phase and largely depended on the logistical support of the army in terms of armament and training . . . By 2000, the Ministry of Defense estimated that the number of the AUC force increased to 8,000 fighters."[93] It would seem that a more assertive role in violent affairs, coupled with the increase in narcotrafficking profits, helped swell the ranks of the AUC.[94]

With windfall profits due to securing new markets and territory after the fall of the large drug cartels, "the paramilitary groups in the 1990s reinvented themselves from a mere satellite to the army and its intelligence services to forces with their own momentum and needs for expansion and political agenda."[95] This expansion was evidenced not only by a sharp and consistent increase in combat personnel but also in acquisition of armaments and hardware. One scholar notes that the AUC added "mortars, anti-aircraft missiles, and U.S. made-helicopters—it is rumored that this include Apache helicopters."[96] More specific estimates state that, "by the late 1990s, the AUC acquired about thirty aircraft, eleven of which are Cessna, four shipping planes, fourteen helicopters with military equipment (including Black Hawk), and one sophisticated military helicopter equipped with the state-of-the-art emergency operations. This is in addition to several boats to be used for water transportation."[97] By the time of disarmament, the AUC had acquired a considerable arsenal. In addition to receiving training from the Colombian military, the AUC hired British and Israeli mercenaries to professionalize their forces.[98,99]

With the increase in revenue and combat capabilities, the AUC's military operations began to move from its traditional strongholds and areas of operational competency in the northwest to the south and east of the country. The strongest area of support for the AUC remained in

[g] Felbab-Brown speculates that the motivation to increase the counting of armed members during disarmament was an attempt to appear to be in compliance with the legal requirements of the disarmament plan. In addition, she argues that, given the fluidity between FARC- and AUC-held areas, it is likely that many guerrillas defected to the AUC to take advantage of the demobilization's perquisites.[91]

"Northwest Colombia, with affiliate groups in Valle del Cauca, on the west coast, and Meta Department, in Central Columbia [*sic*]."[100] The increase in combatant ranks, combined with greater firepower and territorial expansion, permitted increased engagement with the AUC's primary enemy, the leftist guerrillas, but it also included a brutal campaign of human rights abuses and massacres of civilians, civil society members, and political foes.[h]

Public Component

The AUC's public component included public service provision, execution of quasi-state functions, and direct political participation (both illicit/clandestine and overt/legal).

Because the AUC amassed considerable wealth and power through narcotrafficking, the group was provided with its own capital and resources to engage in quasi-state activities while perpetrating widespread violence. At various times throughout its existence, the AUC led the country's armed groups in the perpetration of human rights abuses, political assassinations, massacres, and actions that made the group responsible for approximately 700,000 of the country's two million internally displaced persons.[i] The AUC's strategy for the use of its public component dovetailed with its capacity as an armed actor able to wield the use of force at its own will. The group pursued a double-barreled strategy: acts aimed at sowing terror and increasing control mixed with the provision of goods and services, aimed toward blunting the blowback from its atrocities and potentially co-opting those it did not brutalize.

As Rochlin notes, the AUC employed "terror and carnage as the principal basis for its political power," with the objective of gaining "political recognition."[103] The strategic use of violence by the AUC was important because it allowed the group to approach a monopoly on the use of force, increase territorial control, and consolidate political, economic, and military power in its zones of control. These developments, in turn, contributed to the AUC's ability to carry out its public activities, undertaken largely for the purpose of increasing its recognition as a legitimate political force (see the *Legitimacy* section). The public components of the AUC allowed it to engage in acts of violence against noncombatants while continuing to advance the twin narrative of the

[h] See Human Rights Watch's *World Report 1992* for some grim statistics on the AUC's atrocities.[101]

[i] For the AUC's use of violence and the statistical information concerning the usage, see Human Rights Watch's *World Report 1992*.[102]

group as both "an expression of civil society" and as a force whose purpose was to provide security and protection of life and property where the state was unable.[104]

To soften the group's image, the AUC instituted and engaged in significant and vast social service programs. Such quasi-state activities included the development of critical infrastructure such as road construction and maintenance, the management of health clinics, the organization of public health groups, and the development and funding of schools.[105] The AUC's quasi-state activities also included dispute resolution activities related to "property, debt, and political rivalry."[106] In some areas, the group also engaged in "traditional" forms of revenue generation, such as the taxation of activities and goods associated with coca production and trafficking.[j] The AUC's use of taxation was not limited to only illegal activities. Paramilitary groups were known to tax municipal spending in an effort to control local officials.[108] This process of taxation was sometimes combined with coerced protection payments. The ostensive purpose of these latter collections was the funding of the AUC's antiguerrilla capabilities. Nevertheless, such schemes often generated resentment for their extortive nature, particularly as they spread beyond the illicit drug industry to include even those individuals engaged in legal commerce, such as cattle ranchers and landholders. In these cases, such taxes and fees were often viewed as simply another way in which the AUC's self-defense groups were enriching themselves.

In addition to allowing the group to provide direct services, levy taxes, and regulate commercial activity, the AUC's power and wealth granted it access to influential political elites. Such access provided opportunities to directly engage with legally established state institutions. For years, the AUC exercised influence on Colombia's electoral politics and government institutions. As Hristov notes, "there is much evidence to suggest . . . paramilitarism has attained a considerable presence (expressed in many ways) in political governance at all levels: presidential, congressional, regional, and local."[109,k] The AUC often used violence, intimidation, and coercion to influence local political leaders and local elections.[111] Another strategy was the co-opting of political officials, often achieved through bribes and payoffs.[112] Former AUC leader Salvatore Mancuso once boasted that the AUC controlled approximately one-third of the Colombian Congress. Rabasa et al. note that, while Mancuso's claim is likely overblown, nevertheless, "there is

[j] On this point, and the "traditional" model of armed actors' economic resource generation, see Brewer Norman.[107]

[k] For a discussion of the ways that paramilitaries overtly and covertly influence Colombian politics see Hristov.[110]

a group of rural legislators who openly support the AUC in varying degrees."[113] In fact, the AUC's involvement in the Colombian Congress ran significantly deeper. In an event that is known as the Parapolitical Scandal, it was discovered that numerous Colombian lawmakers were deeply involved with paramilitary groups. The scandal has touched many of Colombia's national institutions including the courts and congress. To date, thirty-seven members of congress and five governors haven been convicted for their collusion with paramilitaries, including former President Uribe's cousin, Mario, who apparently relied on paramilitary financial support for his 2002 run for the senate.[114]

While the Parapolitical scandal is evidence of the vast interconnections between the AUC and the Colombian government, the group's public component culminated in peace negotiations and the disarmament process, signaling the transition from the AUC's categorization as thuggish narcotraffickers—common criminals—to (arguably) legitimate actors with a political program, worthy of a seat at the negotiating table.

IDEOLOGY

The AUC's ideological heritage was rooted in the early paramilitaries of the 1950s and 1960s. These groups' ideologies were distinguished by their opposition to Communism and the revolutionary reform agenda of left-wing guerrilla groups. In contrast to the ideologies of left-wing guerrillas, the paramilitaries' ideological narrative was located in the protection of "private property and free enterprise" and the groups' abilities to provide protective services for the upper and middle classes in areas where the state was unwilling or unable.[115] While this ideological narrative pervaded Colombian paramilitarism, in their earliest days, the paramilitary predecessors of the AUC lacked a unified political and ideological agenda. This changed with formation of the AUC. As longtime AUC researcher and journalist Jan McGirk notes, after taking the lead in the wake of Fidel Castaño's death, "Carlos saw himself not just as the leader of a crusade, but its ideologue."[116] The days of disparate and competing ideological narratives were over once Castaño took charge.

Two key areas of the AUC's ideology emerged as the group grew. First, the AUC honed its anti-Communist, right-wing, antiguerrilla rhetoric. This was evident in the AUC's founding principles, which called for the creation of a clear political project that was antiguerrilla, protective of the state, and intent on advancing the narrative that the

group was acting in legitimate self-defense.[l] As the AUC developed, so did its ideological platform, and "by 2002 . . . [the AUC] was increasingly developing a political message and a political following among urban middle classes and large business interests," who found the AUC's law and order, antiguerrilla rhetoric appealing.[118] This narrative was attractive to those who viewed the leftist groups as a threat and who sought stability and protection of their economic interests.

The second ideological area to emerge stemmed from the AUC's claim to function as a bulwark of traditional values. As Rochlin notes, the paramilitaries possessed "an ideological agenda that included "social cleansing" of such targets as homosexuals, prostitutes, drug addicts, beggars, and the homeless. . . . Overall, they have promoted ultra-right wing social policies against the backdrop of a society beset with shifting moral code."[119] Here the AUC appealed to conservative values that viewed the poor and down-trodden, and the petty criminal acts that they perpetrate, as base and perverse and in need of eradication.

Finally, in an interesting shift in the early 2000s, the group began to espouse populist rhetoric calling for land reform. This led one analyst to claim that the discourse closely resembled the guerrillas' rhetoric.[120] Paramilitary groups that preceded the AUC had recognized the efficacy of populist appeals but had lacked the unification and sophistication of such public relations messaging that the central command could now execute.[m] We can conclude that "while there exists a general consensus that economic motivations were at the heart of paramilitary activity, the AUC did make an effort to present itself as ideologically driven."[121] In summary, the AUC's ideology can be characterized as representing the trinity of "tradition, property, and order," appealing to values that are staunchly antiguerrilla.[122]

LEGITIMACY

The paramilitaries of Colombia have received their greatest support from two sectors of Colombian society: (1) the middle and upper classes, including landed elite, cattle ranchers, and business people (including some multinational corporations) seeking security and protection from the guerrillas; and (2) the Colombian military and political establishments.

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[l] Hristov notes the key principles that the AUC articulated as the basis of its founding.[117]

[m] See the *Public Component* section for a discussion on the use of NGOs and cattle ranching partners to facilitate land exchanges and advance the AUC's populist rhetoric and social programs.

This support, and the public's view of the AUC as a legitimate actor, was partly contingent on the group's conduct in a given area of control. In some cases, the AUC was extortive, such as in its demands that ranchers, landowners, and small businesses pay "taxes" and "contributions" that would ostensibly fund the group's protective services. When viewed as unduly burdensome, instituted simply to enrich the AUC's leadership, such activities, coupled with brutal massacres and obvious connections to narcotrafficking, reduced the legitimacy of the group in the eyes of some of these constituents.[123] At the same time, the AUC's involvement in narcotrafficking, and the particular form of stability that it could sometimes bring, also helped increase its legitimacy among the population in these same areas. In what social scientists call the "political capital" model of armed groups' participation in illicit economies, the AUC's support, protection, and engagement in the illegal drug trade increased its legitimacy among various members of the public.[n] By helping the AUC "feed, protect, and serve the local population," the resources generated from illicit economic participation allowed the group to "quickly demonstrate their power and expose the government's unwillingness or inability to provide for the population's needs."[129] Having the resources to engage in quasi-state functions legitimated the AUC among beneficiaries of these goods and services.

Dating back to the Colombian military's early creation and support of the self-defense groups as counterinsurgency auxiliary forces, military support for the AUC (and its predecessors) has remained relatively strong. The strength of such overt military support for the AUC's groups had been linked historically to the Colombian political establishment. Colombia's political and judicial sectors vacillated between conferring legal legitimacy on the various instantiations of paramilitarism to declarations of the illegality of the paramilitaries. While overt political support, and the legitimacy attached to it, ebbed and flowed as the groups were legalized and illegalized at various points in Colombia's modern history, it is important to note that the AUC enjoyed covert political support throughout its existence, thus contributing to the group's legitimacy (see the *Origins of the AUC* section).

Under Castaño, the AUC was long engaged in a sophisticated and concerted effort to gain legitimacy at the local, regional, and national levels. In fact, as early as 1991, Castaño had advocated that the groups "construct a solid and coherent political platform."[130] In 1997, the CONVIVIR was officially declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional

[n] See Felbab-Brown[124] for a discussion of the political capital model of legitimacy and its relationship to illicit economies. For a broader discussion of this "hearts and minds" approach to counterinsurgency, of which the political capital model is part, see Thompson,[125] Galula,[126] Nagl,[127] and Kilcullen.[128]

Court of Colombia. Under Decision C-296, the once legal paramilitaries were now illegal, and many of the illegal groups simply joined up with the AUC.[131,132] Of course, many of the groups that constituted the AUC were officially illegal even before the court's ruling. Given this fact, one motivation for Castaño's quest for gaining legitimacy for the AUC vis-à-vis the state was that it provided the group with an exit strategy. Instead of challenging the state to a zero-sum game, the AUC chose to seek recognition as a political actor.[o]

This quest for legitimacy resulted in the AUC slowly changing its paramilitary tactics, although the group did continue to kill civilians and rivals and engage in intragroup assassinations.[134] In addition to making small tactical changes, the group waged a sophisticated public relations campaign aimed at members of the Colombian public, the international community, and the political and economic elite of Colombia.[p] Legitimization, and the recognition of the AUC as a political actor and not merely just a criminal syndicate, would provide the group with a seat at the negotiating table and, as facts have borne out, a path to disarmament and reduced prison sentences for many AUC members.

MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

The motivation for why individuals become involved with armed groups is complex. There are significant variations in the motivations for why people join, why they stay, why they leave, and why they defect (like leaving the FARC and joining the AUC). Not only do these motivations vary from agent to agent, they also vary depending on one's role in the organization—whether one holds a leadership position or rank and file membership. Compounding this complexity is the clandestine nature of these groups, which often makes these motivations opaque to those outside of the organization. One of the best ways to ascertain motivations is through in-depth qualitative research. The following section draws from scholarly research on the motivations of the AUC's members.[q]

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[o] Hristov points out the efficacy of this strategy: even drug lords began to purchase AUC franchises and the AUC name in gambits aimed at reducing prison sentences and avoiding extradition.[133]

[p] This full-court public relations press included sophisticated websites, exclusive interviews with journalists, and claims to respect international humanitarian law. For a fascinating discussion of the AUC's public relations program, see Tate.[135]

[q] This section relies on two sets of in-depth interviews that scholars conducted with demobilized AUC members. Theidon[136] conducted in-depth interviews and observation of forty-eight ex-combatants of the AUC. Scholars from the National University of Colombia, Bogotá, conducted extensive interviews with demobilized AUC members.[137,138]

Research suggests that "with ex-combatants of the AUC, their principal reasons for joining were: via an acquaintance who convinced the person to join (29%); because they lived in a zone under paramilitary control and joining was 'just what you did' (17%); recruited by force or threat (14%); or economic motivations (27%)."[139] This research by Theidon demonstrates the role that familial, peer, and social networks played in motivating individuals to join the AUC. Among the rank and file, many members were also motivated by a desire for revenge, others by "a love of arms," and still others joined during times of economic hardship, hoping to increase their economic opportunities.[140] This latter point was important because, unlike other groups, the AUC paid their soldiers, even offering a bonus for every guerrilla they killed.[141] The reasons for joining cited by one ex-combatant, boredom, social status, and good pay and treatment, are indicative of the various motivations that many recruits possessed.[142] In addition, social expectations and a culture of paramilitarism were contributing motivational factors. Machismo and status played an integral role in individuals joining the AUC and remaining in the group. These individuals cite membership in the AUC as providing a feeling of self-worth, along with incentives such as respect from those in their communities, the ability to obtain fine clothes, and the lure of beautiful women.[143,r]

There was also motivation on behalf of some rank-and-file membership once in the AUC to climb its ranks. The more ambitious members, and those with reasonable hope of achieving a leadership position, would often remain with the group. Interviews suggest that this ambition was largely underpinned by financial motivations. Not only did those in command positions receive a significant increase in salary but, as one ex-combatant detailed, the self-defense groups had billing offices that paid out percentages (typically ten percent) to commanders according to the number of guerrillas they killed and fought.[144] In addition to an increase in salary, with a better rank came access to better resources, increased physical protection, and subordinate staff. Commanders had "cars, motorcycle, guns, and staff" that made their lives easier.[145] So sought after were these positions that the competition to attain them bred an environment full of deceit and murder. As one former AUC combatant put it, "through any method, we sought to achieve a top position," and AUC members would "kill a family member or a friend to climb the ladder."[146]

With respect to AUC leadership, a large motivation for joining and staying was the desire for financial gain. Once at the top, the financial

[r] It should be noted that these romanticized notions rarely fit empirical reality. Of Theidon's interviewees, ninety percent were foot soldiers who endured grueling conditions that were anything but filled with beautiful dates and fancy clothing.

rewards were staggering. The top members of the AUC were exorbitantly wealthy.[s] In at least one case, leadership of the Centaurs Bloc was purchased by Miguel Arroyave for approximately seven million dollars—a good investment given the AUC's ability to turn a profit.[148] The huge financial incentives for the AUC's leadership led some scholars to argue that their motivations had little to do with ideology. According to Chernick, while the top leadership was influenced by ideology, it was, ultimately, more interested in land—its use, its acquisition, and keeping it in the hands of rural oligarchs.[149,t] Such land policies ensured the AUC control over illicit drug production and smuggling routes, as well as direct links to petroleum pipelines and areas of resource extraction.

Timing also affected the AUC's members' motivations, particularly around the time of its peace talks with the government through the period of demobilization. For example, during this time, the AUC saw a large growth in its armed combatant membership. This growth, combined with low attrition rates, resulted in more than 30,000 armed individuals taking part in the disarmament program, a number that far exceeded previous estimates of the size of the AUC's armed component. As Porch and Rasmussen suggest, many poor joined the AUC (or tried to argue that they were current members) to receive the disarmament stipend.[151] The AUC leadership encouraged this membership; a larger membership size increased their bargaining power. In addition, drug lords were known to buy the AUC name, or sometimes whole AUC groups, in order to take advantage of the lenient prison sentences for AUC members that were enshrined in the Justice and Peace Law.[152,153] Practically overnight, the drug kingpins became "members" of the AUC. As for the leadership, the motivation to remain in the AUC during demobilization and disarmament was pragmatic. It nearly ensured (as a result of the Justice and Peace Law) that they would see little prison time and that sentences would be served in Colombia.[u]

[s] To get a sense of this wealth, see Felbab-Brown for a discussion of the AUC's share of the illicit drug market in Colombia.[147] Also see the website Verdad Abierta (http://www.verdadabierta.com), which has an excellent collection of statistical information (including information on the narcoeconomy) and primary documents from the AUC.

[t] For land acquisition as a general objective of the AUC's political program, see Rochlin.[150]

[u] This latter belief was unfounded, as many of the top leadership were subsequently extradited to the United States.

OPERATIONS

Paramilitary

Reliable statistical data on the AUC's paramilitary activity are difficult to obtain and vary according to the source and the source's methodology.[v] The Global Terrorism Database counts fifty-six terrorist incidents perpetrated by the AUC between 1999 and 2002. While these data are incomplete (they exclude attacks that occurred in 1997 and 1998), they provide a useful look into the activities of the AUC.

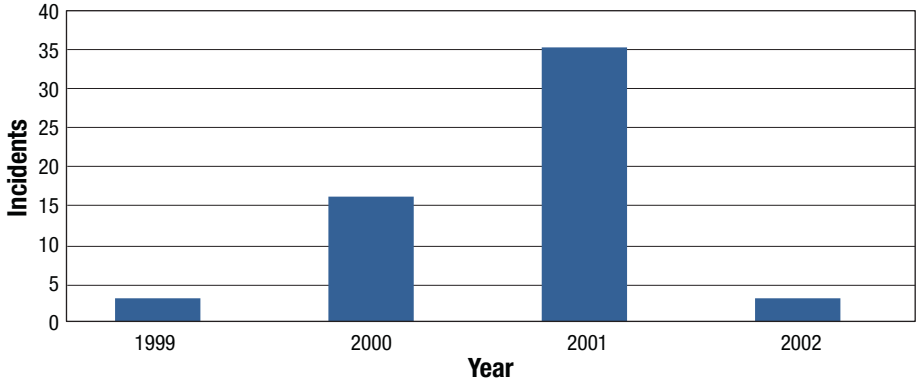

Figure 9-4. AUC incidents per year.[w]

The bulk of such activity (sixty-four percent) came in the form of armed assaults.[x] A smaller number of attacks included kidnapping (twenty-eight percent) and assassination (seven percent).[y] The AUC typically carried out these attacks using automatic weapons, and, in some cases, incendiary devices, grenades, and explosives.

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[v] For example, the Global Terrorism Database (a reliable source) counts zero terrorist attacks perpetrated by the AUC in 2005.[154] Conversely, the Colombian National Police's 2005 Crime Report attributes twelve terrorist attacks to the self-defense groups (a proxy term for the AUC).[155] The Global Terrorism Database also fails to include the Mapiripán Massacre, one of the most brutal and well known of the massacres perpetrated by the AUC, nor does it include any acts occurring before 1999. One reason that the Global Terrorism Database does not show a complete picture of the AUC's activities is because the data set disaggregates some of the activities of the AUC's member groups (such as the ACCU) and counts those attacks separately.

[w] Although the original data set attributed post-disarmament attacks to the AUC, it remains unclear whether these groups are neo-AUC units or more informal criminal elements with loose ties to former AUC members. Therefore, these data omit attacks occurring after the AUC's demobilization and disarmament (2006).

[x] Thirty-six of fifty-six total incidents.

[y] Sixteen of fifty-six total incidents and four of fifty-six total incidents, respectively.

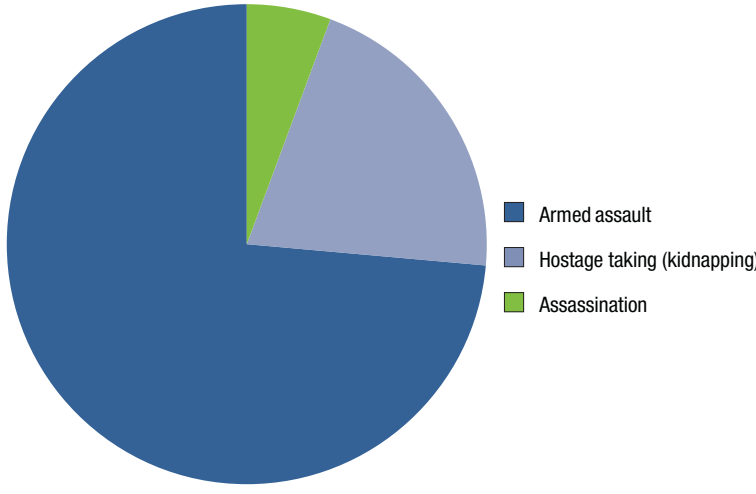

Figure 9-5. AUC attack types.

The targets of the AUC varied over time and were typically guerrillas and their suspected civilian sympathizers. As the paramilitaries grew in strength and number, they expanded their targets. As the list of targets grew, attacks on political actors who were considered sympathetic to the guerrillas became a common tactic of Colombia's paramilitaries. The groups' activity in the 1980s and 1990s typifies the strategy of political assassination. During this period, the left-wing opposition party, the Patriotic Union, saw 4,000 of its members killed. At one point in 1996, the party saw a member killed an average of every other day. The *New York Times* reports, "the dead include most of the presidential candidates the party has fielded, seven members of the House of Representatives, two senators and thousands of regional and municipal office holders."[156] Such killings were not limited to only aspirants of public office but also included "whoever might vote for them. In the eastern and northern parts of the country—particularly the Urabá zone, a strategic corridor for drugs and weapons—right-wing death squads are waging a campaign of extermination, terrorizing residents and frequently forcing them to flee."[157] These killings are evidence of the widespread violence that Colombia's paramilitaries were willing to perpetrate against their political opponents.

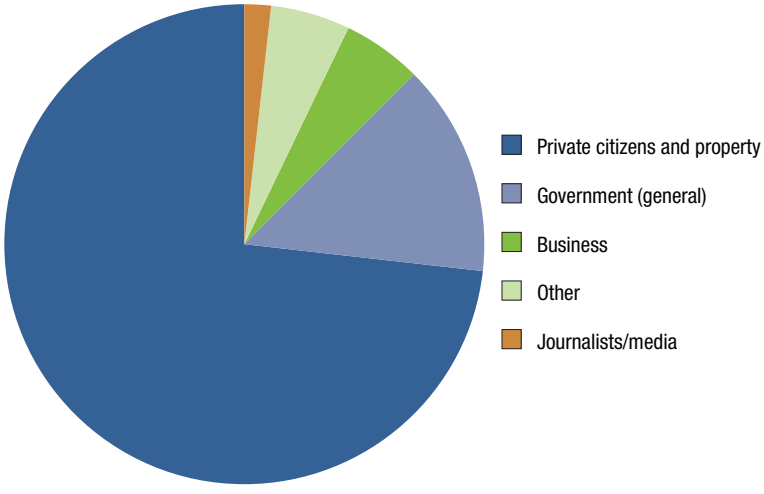

Figure 9-6. AUC target types.

In addition to political killings, the AUC's activities included violence against noncombatants.[z]

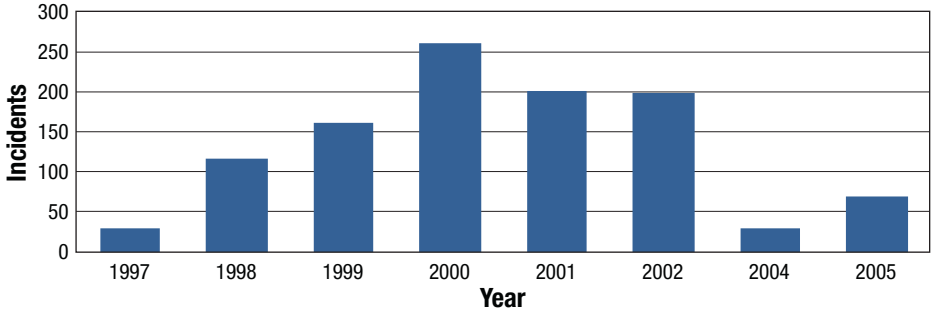

Figure 9-7. Civilian fatalities attributed to AUC.

Under Castaño, the AUC sought expansion, and this resulted in significant attacks on civilians. Writing in 2001, Tate concludes:

> The AUC has embarked on a calculated strategy to expand their operations into new regions of the country. In public documents and press statements, they have announced their intention to begin an offensive military campaign, and have in fact carried out a series of massacres targeting the civilian population in these areas. These operations are carried out by newly created 'mobile squads'—elite training and combat units. Following a summit in July 1997, the AUC issued

[z] For an extensive analysis and documentation of the AUC's atrocities, see various Human Rights Watch reports. Human Rights Watch has documented numerous paramilitary atrocities in past reports.[158,159,160]

> a statement announcing an offensive war 'according to the operational capacity of each regional group,' establishing as the primary targets the traditional guerrilla strongholds of the western plains and the eastern jungle departments. The July massacre in Mapiripán, Meta appeared to be the first step in implementing this new plan. From 15 July through 20 July 1997, gunmen from the AUC took control of Mapiripán, killed at least 30 people, and threatened others. The exact death toll was never established, as many of the bodies were dismembered and thrown into a nearby river.[161]

The AUC's expansion is demonstrated through the sprawl of documented incidents. This well-documented paramilitary strategy of expansion was fueled through assassinations, massacres, and the attempted eradication of guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers.[aa] It made the AUC one of the most well known and, in large sectors of Colombian society, also one of the most reviled groups in Colombia.

[aa] See Hristov for a small sample of these acts.[162]

Figure 9-8. AUC's area of influence.

Administrative

Membership and Recruitment

The AUC's membership was primarily young men. It consisted of former members of the drug cartels' security personnel, drug lords, landowners, former Colombian military officials, and former

guerrillas.[163,164,165] Because of the AUC's ability to pay its members well, the group often drew from low-income populations, both rural and urban.[166] In addition to financial motivation, Villegas has identified three other factors for individuals' enlistment in the AUC: fun and a sense of adventure, retaliation for past abuses, and generic promises made by the group to the enlistee.[167] Nevertheless, there is general consensus that economic motivations were probably the primary reason new members enlisted.[168,169] The AUC certainly capitalized on these motives in its recruitment initiatives. As Human Rights Watch reports, "the one reason we heard most frequently was that they [AUC recruits] simply wanted a job, and the paramilitaries paid better than most."[170] Knowing this, the AUC offered selective incentives in the form of relatively high salaries.

In addition to the rural and urban poor, the AUC's membership was also heavily populated by former Colombian armed service members and former guerrillas. Castaño boasted in 2000 that within the AUC ranks were 800 former guerrillas, more than 1,000 former soldiers, and approximately 135 former army officers.[171] Similar to the guerrilla groups, the AUC recruited, and sometimes forcibly conscripted, both women and children. At the time of demobilization, there were 1,911 women registered, comprising roughly six percent of the demobilized AUC population.[172] It is estimated that approximately twenty percent of the AUC's combatants were children.[173] Although the AUC was the only group in Colombia to officially restrict membership to those ages eighteen and above, the requirement was routinely violated.[174]

Psychological

The AUC engaged in psychological activities both internal and external to the group.[ab] These activities were constituted by a three-pronged psychological strategy: (1) indoctrination and coercion; (2) terror and intimidation; and (3) the quest for political legitimacy. The use of psychological tactics dates back to the early days of the paramilitaries, constituting an important part of the Colombian military's counterinsurgency plan. These psychological operations included the building of a vast network of underground supporters (see the *Underground and Auxiliary* section) who were ideologically sympathetic to the "grievance discourse" that was articulated by the early paramilitaries.[177] This narrative of an aggrieved middle class beset by a guerrilla threat and in need of self-defense capabilities could be disseminated through

[ab] For a historical overview of the early psychological operations that the Colombian military and paramilitary units engaged in under Plan LAZO, see Maullin.[175] Also see Human Rights Watch.[176]

informal networks of ranchers, landowners, and business people, with the idea being that such narratives would help vilify the guerrillas, thus undermining their support, while simultaneously increasing sympathy for the paramilitary groups. This narrative was effective, and it extended through the lifetime of the AUC. The narrative was later more formally disseminated through institutionalized processes such as the curricula of anti-Communist schools in the rural countryside.[178] The power of the antiguerrilla self-defense narrative, coupled with pro-paramilitary institutions, helped reinforce the image of the AUC as a legitimate political actor both within the group's own ranks and among the general public.

These soft coercive practices were "complimented" by the AUC's strategy of sowing terror and fear into the civilian population. This was achieved through assassinations of guerrillas and their family members, as well as those suspected of being guerrilla sympathizers, collaborators, or clandestine members. In addition to targeting guerrillas, the AUC practiced the "cleansing" and purging of undesirable elements of the population such as prostitutes, petty thieves, and the homeless. One effective strategy the group used when taking over a new town or village (especially when wresting it from guerrilla control) was to identify a highly respected member of the community, take him to the town square, and publicly hack him to pieces with a chainsaw starting at the ankles and working upward, so the victim lived (and screamed) as long as possible. Other times, the AUC would carry out massacres of civilians.[ac] The message was clear—opposition to the AUC was a grave mistake—and killings that terrorized everyday Colombians were a potent psychological tool.

The third leg of the AUC's psychological operations was impacted by its desire to achieve political legitimacy. This resulted in what can be described as nothing other than a full-blown public relations campaign to "engender public acceptance of their [the AUC's] role as political spokesmen."[179] This campaign was bolstered by the changed electoral map (changed through heavy AUC involvement) and the allies that it produced for the AUC among the political establishment. This, combined with the public relations push, was integral to the AUC's attempt at changing the public's perception of the group from merely criminal drug lords with private militias to legitimate political actors. This savvy, and ultimately successful, aim to gain legitimacy involved creating websites for the various blocs and bloc commanders, replete with editorials, links to news articles, interviews, organizational charts, and

[ac] These tactics have been discussed throughout this chapter at length.

communiqués.[ad] In addition to making use of the Internet, the AUC's members effectively courted the press, both in Colombia and internationally. Castaño even had a biography written about him, and not to be outdone, Salvatore Mancuso did as well.

The AUC also established NGOs and foundations with missions (like land reform and redistribution) that would garner popular support, with the rationale being to display that the AUC cared about political issues and political reform—in effect demonstrating that they were not simply drug lords.[180] The AUC openly claimed to practice self-restraint in its combat operations by adhering to strict rules of engagement that comported with international law. This position, and the legitimacy that it conferred, was aided when the AUC's Castaño met with the International Committee of the Red Cross, who recognized the AUC's role as an armed belligerent. The goal again was to shift the public's perceptions and attitudes toward the group so that the AUC would be viewed as an armed party to an antiguerrilla struggle, willing to negotiate its way to peace.

This three-part strategy of early traditional psychological operations, coupled with the use of terror and fear and capped off with an embrace of contemporary public relations, is testimony to the AUC's adept use of psychological operations.

Political

Given their direct and indirect support from the political and military institutions of the Colombian state, Colombia's paramilitary groups have been engaged in political involvement since their inception. Much of this involvement has been clandestine and illicit. As Colombian Senator Rafael Pardo pointed out, in many municipalities, mayoral candidates and aspirants for town councils are elected only with the permission of the AUC.[181] For years, the AUC had been bribing people into office, bundling money for friendly candidates' campaign coffers, and intimidating voters into supporting the AUC's candidates of choice.[ae] Such activities were clearly helped by the endemic corruption in Colombia.

When Carlos Castaño formed the AUC, he did so with a clear eye toward the group's political involvement. In many cases, where the state was anemic, the AUC would exercise near total control over political

[ad] The AUC's main web page, http://www.colombialibre.org/, has been taken down and replaced with a tourism site, although parts of the site remain archived and can be accessed through web crawls and other archival tools.

[ae] See the *Public Component* section for a discussion of these tactics.

affairs. For example, the AUC was involved in arbitration of disputes involving finances, even in some cases of inheritance disagreements.[182] In some places members were such an accepted part of the community, they were referred to as *los muchachos*, "the boys." In other areas, the AUC acted like the local police. In areas where state institutions were stronger, commanders worked directly with local and regional officials. As Commander Andres of the Northern Bloc commented, "we advise the authorities so they take advantage of the best opportunities for their communities."[183] Such activity was part of the AUC's clear political agenda, marked by the desire to achieve political legitimacy. This aspiration was, in part, achieved. For example, in 2004, as the government and the AUC began peace negotiations, three top AUC commanders (including Salvatore Mancuso, then the AUC's leader) addressed the Colombian Congress.[184] Of course, as the Parapolitical Scandal has demonstrated, members of the AUC were no strangers to Colombian legislators (see the *Public Component* section).

Perhaps the AUC's largest display of political power was the passage of the Justice and Peace Law in 2005. The law required the AUC to relinquish its weapons in exchange for lenient prison sentences, a statute of limitations on prosecutable crimes, and guarantees (later revoked) of not being extradited.

EXTERNAL ACTORS AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Much of the AUC's activities were confined to Colombia—the group had largely a domestic focus and little interest in exporting (with the exception of its illegal goods) the violence and terror that it waged at home. As Saab and Taylor conclude, "most of the activities of the AUC focused on attaining local and regional political and economic power."[185] But for the group to attain such power, the AUC had to engage in activities that were not isolated to only the borders of Colombia.

Not unlike for the FARC, the primary source of income for the AUC was derived from the illegal drug industry. The group's reliance on narcotrafficking and criminal activities such as arms smuggling extended the AUC's activities beyond the borders of Colombia.[186] These activities created complex relationships with Colombia's most immediate geographic neighbors. The AUC would battle other armed groups for control of the lucrative smuggling routes along the borders

of Panama, Venezuela, and the Caribbean.[af] Such activity would sometimes lead to tension with Colombia's neighbors. For example, in 2004, Venezuela discovered several AUC members within its borders, leading then President Chávez to speculate that they were planning a coup.[188] Having large areas of territories ungoverned by the Colombian state and effectively controlled by the AUC led to various forms of support and opposition from Colombia's neighbors.

Of course, the AUC's illegal activities, particularly its narcotrafficking and terrorism, were viewed as international issues by many states. Evidence indicates that the AUC engaged in export of illegal drugs to North America, Europe, and West Africa.[189] The AUC's involvement in narcotrafficking activity led to several US indictments against its top leadership, many of whom have been extradited and are facing trial or imprisoned in the United States. Finally, the United States and many European states have designated the AUC a terrorist organization.

The United States probably has had the most significant involvement with the AUC and its predecessor groups. Much of this history dates back to the United States' Cold War counterinsurgency strategy (see the *Origins of the AUC* section).[ag] The more recent history of US involvement involves Plan Colombia, the massive military assistance program designed to aid Colombia in coca eradication. The plan, a joint cooperation between the US and Colombian governments instituted in 2000, was largely a counterinsurgency effort focused on aerial coca eradication aimed at the FARC.[191]

FINANCES, LOGISTICS, SUSTAINMENT, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Criminal Activity

The AUC was engaged in significant criminal activity throughout its existence. The primary source of the group's income came from involvement in the illicit drug trade. With the fall of the cartel system, the paramilitaries moved from working for and with the cartels to engaging directly in narcotrafficking. Activities included cultivation, production, and distribution of coca, as well as the taxing of peasants involved in growing and producing coca paste. By the time the AUC was formed, the self-defense groups were firmly entrenched in Colombia's illicit drug trade. Richani estimates that, in 2002, the AUC's annual

[af] For a detailed analysis of the AUC's activity along the Venezuelan border, see Rabasa et al.[187]

[ag] For an excellent discussion of this history, see Maullin.[190]

profits from the illicit drug trade were about seventy-five million dollars, a figure that comprised about eighty percent of the group's total income.[192,ah] The AUC would eventually come to control a sizable proportion of Colombia's drug business. Felbab-Brown estimates that the group controlled forty percent of the industry, aided by its comparative advantage of geographic proximity to Panama, its control of Urabá, and its access to lucrative smuggling routes.[194] According to Carlos Castaño himself, in the year 2000, seventy percent of the AUC's funds were generated from the illicit drug market, with the other thirty percent derived from extortion.[195]

The AUC also diversified. Its other forms of criminal sustainment included extortion and "taxation" (see the *Public Component* section) and gasoline theft (important in coca paste processing). This latter activity constituted a main source of funding for some blocs and self-defense groups. In fact, one petroleum company's losses reached approximately five million dollars a month; an investigation discovered that eighty percent of these losses funded the AUC and constituted the main source of funding for the Puerto Boyacá group.[196] Other forms of criminal activity for the AUC included smuggling, counterfeiting, prostitution, and gang activity.[197] A final form of criminal activity was the AUC's "protection" services that it offered to multinational corporations. In what is perhaps the most well-known case, the AUC provided "security" and "protection" for the US-based company Chiquita as it worked in Colombia. Chiquita reportedly paid the AUC 1.7 million dollars over a six-year period, three years of which the AUC was on the US list of designated terrorist groups. Chiquita later publicly admitted the illegal payments and, under court order, paid a fine of twenty-five million dollars.[ai]

Sustainment Outside Criminal Activities

Outside of extortion, the illicit drug trade, and counterfeiting, the AUC had a large system of "taxation" that ostensibly funded services similar to the protective security that the state would provide.[aj] These taxes, or voluntary contributions, were levied against coca farmers, small business people (including poor urban vendors), large multinational corporations, agribusiness, and state funds earmarked for particular

[ah] Alternatively, Rochlin puts the estimate at about seventy percent, but he fails to provide a source for this figure.[193]

[ai] For a record of Chiquita's involvement, see the National Security Archive's "Chiquita Papers."[198]

[aj] See Hristov for a discussion of legal and illegal sustainment.[199]

municipalities.[200] In addition to collecting these protection rents, the AUC expanded its operations directly into Colombia's legal economy. This expansion included involvement in government contracts (particularly at the local level), and apparently the AUC's involvement in contracting has been most active in the area of grants and contracts for government-subsidized health care for the poor.[201] In some cases, the AUC had created its own companies to provide services such as private security and cable television.[202] In true Mafioso form, the group put competitors out of business through threats and intimidation.[203]

Logistics

Due to the history of the paramilitaries' involvement in both rural and urban Colombia, the AUC had a sophisticated logistical system that permitted it a steady flow of arms and supplies. The logistical pathways were aided by "an alliance among narcotraffickers, landed oligarchy, agribusiness groups, cattle ranchers, conservative political leaders and sectors of the military" that occurred during the nascence of the paramilitaries' formation.[204] In addition to receiving these logistical forms of support, former AUC members have claimed that the group received logistical support from the Colombian military when carrying out operations. For example, Salvatore Mancuso alleged that the military provided support in the case of specific massacres.[205]

Communications

The AUC possessed sophisticated strategies and methods for disseminating information both internally and to the outside public. With respect to intragroup communications, the AUC benefitted from the networks of informal channels that had been instituted earlier. One such example is the vast informal network of cattle ranchers that the ACCU had organized in its early days to provide intelligence and pass messages.[206] These human intelligence and communications networks proved indispensable in the AUC's operations. The AUC also embraced more modern and cutting-edge communications technology, employing faxes, the Internet, sport utility vehicles and pick-up trucks, radios, helicopters, laptops, and cellular and satellite telephones to disseminate threats, identify targets, prepare death lists, and coordinate massacres."[207] The AUC also used code words and decoy names to avoid detection and infiltration.[208]

The AUC also had a sophisticated public communications strategy (see the *Psychological Operations* section). As mentioned previously, this strategy included the development and use of members' own personal

websites. Carlos Castaño had a site and so did Salvatore Mancuso; Mancuso even maintained his site from prison in Colombia. The AUC was also known to cultivate journalists, rolling out exclusive interviews that would garner national and international attention.[ak] The AUC's "leaders used the media to articulate a version of Colombian history that depicted paramilitary forces as both victims and heroes who took responsibility for the security and social welfare dimensions of the state that abandoned them," with a public relations strategy worthy of Madison Avenue.[210]

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CONCLUSION TO PART II

In the preceding section, we have analyzed the origins of political violence in Colombia. The leftist guerrilla insurgencies in the state are among the longest running insurgencies in the world. The persistence and intensity of political violence in the country gives rise not only to questions about how the conflict began but also to possible settlements between the guerrillas, the government, and paramilitary fighters. Traditionally, wars are thought to be settled by armed forces on the battlefield. In the case of insurgencies, which pit the asymmetric forces of insurgents against the stronger forces of the state, conflicts are also fought in the political domain. The leadership of the Provisional Irish Republican Army called its struggle against British occupation in Northern Ireland the "long war" in recognition of the entrenched political battle necessary to erode the will of the enemy to fight. With changes in the international system after the Cold War, political settlements to conclude insurgencies are as likely as decisive military victories by either government or insurgent forces. As a result, more insurgents are becoming politicians responsible for governing. However, in the social sciences, this transition, from an insurgent group to a political party, is among the least studied aspects of political conflict.

Traditionally, civil wars and insurgencies have ended on the battlefield, with either the government or rebel forces emerging as the clear military victor. In Colombia, however, a clear military victory by either the FARC or the Colombian government is unlikely. Instead, the long-running insurgency is most likely to be settled at the negotiating table, as was the case with the M-19 in 1991. Since the end of the Cold War, the incidence of negotiated settlements has increased all over the world. Today, most political conflicts are intrastate, or within states, as opposed to interstate, or between states. Increasingly these intrastate wars[a] do not end in decisive military victories but instead through negotiated settlements.[b] A negotiated settlement is as "an ideal-type war

[a] Toft uses six criteria to define civil wars, an amalgamation of criteria from various respected scholars in the field. The criteria includes a commonly used "death threshold," a macabre moniker for a criteria of at least an average of one thousand battle deaths per year. This high death threshold excludes "smaller-scale" insurgencies, such as in the Northern Ireland conflict. However, other conflict researchers, such as Nicholas Sambanis, use a death threshold of a total one thousand battle deaths throughout the duration of the conflict, which would include the conflict in Northern Ireland. As evidenced here, political scientists have struggled to agree on a precise quantification of what constitutes a "civil war."[1]

[b] Negotiated settlements, and civil war termination in general, are thought to have increased in the post-Cold War environment for a number of reasons, including the withdrawal of US and Soviet resources from proxy wars as well as increased pressure on the United States and the international community to intervene in civil wars.[2]

termination in which neither side admits defeat and the combatants agree to end the violence and accept common terms on how to govern a postwar state."[3] A military victory, by contrast, is as "an ideal-type war termination in which one side explicitly acknowledges defeat and surrenders."[4] In the 129 civil wars that took place in 1940–2000, seventy-nine, or seventy percent, ended in a military victory. Only twenty-two wars, or nineteen percent, ended in negotiated settlement. The 1990s saw a dramatic increase in the number of civil wars that ended, thirty-seven in all, or one-third of all the wars that began in 1940–2000. Furthermore, of those wars that ended in the 1990s, forty-one percent ended through negotiated settlement, tied with the percentage of those ending in military victory. What is striking is that of all the civil wars that have ended in negotiated settlement, two-thirds of those settlements occurred in the 1990s.[5]

The net effect of the prevalence of negotiated settlements and power-sharing agreements is that more insurgents are "changing their stripes"[6] and demobilizing into the political process. The transformation of insurgent groups to the legitimate political process occurred before the end of the Cold War, but most groups entered politics through the use of force, either through victory over extant governments or former colonial powers.[7] Insurgent groups face numerous challenges in this transformation from illegal, armed opposition groups to bona fide actors in the political process, including those related to organizational structure and security matters. The transition to conventional politics "requires adopting a new political culture, formulating a new programme, installing party organisational structures, recruiting party cadres, and building their capacity to govern."[8] Those insurgent groups that have operated on dual tracks, like the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Féin, appear to adapt more readily to the changing environment but still face numerous obstacles. A leader of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa notes that despite the organization's victory in the 1994 elections after the peace process, the ANC would have benefited from more attention to building a team "ready to govern and build up its capacity to deliver."[9]

The successful transition to "normal" politics after concluding an insurgency or civil war is rare. Many civil wars reignite within a few years of ending. One of the least studied but most important aspects of the transition to normal politics is the transformation of armed groups to nonarmed political parties taking part in the legitimate political process. Many insurgent groups are ill prepared for the challenges of governance. Few of the skills, organizations, and resources necessary for mounting a successful insurgency are beneficial in this new environment. This challenge is among the most difficult of all peacebuilding challenges:

> It not only requires that former combatants lay down their weapons and hand in their military fatigues, but more importantly compels former rebel leaders to change their military strategies into political ones and to reorganize their war-focused military organizations into dialogue-based political entities.[10]

Once insurgents have entered the legitimate political process, it is also difficult to determine the extent to which the group has truly transformed from an armed group to a political party. Although such political parties might fall short of Western standards, political parties in this context are simply defined as those organizations fulfilling the primary function of political parties—fielding electoral candidates for political office. Some groups continue to operate as armed groups while participating in legitimate politics. One scholar developed a typology to help better understand this transformation. The spectrum runs from a full-fledged, successful transformation to a facade transformation that results in little deviation from an armed strategy by the insurgent group. Transformations occur at both the structural and attitudinal levels. That is, the organizational structures of the group alter to accommodate political activities, and changes in attitude and behavior accommodate the shift to political strategies.[11]

Two of the armed groups in Colombia, the ELN and the AUC, have evidenced few attempts to transition to the legal political process. For most of its history, the ELN leadership has maintained a distance from direct participation in Colombian politics to avoid legitimizing what it views as an unjust regime. However, a peace agreement that includes substantial reforms of the Colombian political system and mechanisms for political participation by former guerrillas is likely to signal the onset of a transition by the ELN to the legal political process as it did for the M-19. The AUC's position was unique among the armed groups in the country. At times, the Colombian military and politicians supported the paramilitaries as proxy groups to combat the leftist guerrilla threat. As a result, the group's participation in the legal political process was indirect and clandestine. Some suggest that the AUC received such an attractive settlement from the government in the Justice and Peace Law of 2005 because of the group's position as the government's counter-insurgent proxy. Regardless, the demobilized paramilitary combatants engaged in no meaningful transition to a political party. After demobilizing, it appears that many combatants have instead reorganized into new armed groups of either newly formed paramilitaries, drug traffickers, of *bacrims*.

In Colombia, only the M-19 evidenced a successful transition to the legitimate political process. There are a number of developments that

indicate an insurgent group has made a successful transition. Arguably the most important step is the dismantling of its military wing, the demobilization of its soldiers, and strict adherence to a cease-fire. Secondly, the insurgent group must have developed a stable party organization capable of fielding candidates for political office. Finally, an insurgent group must recognize the ballot, not bullets, as the principal means to achieve its objectives and for selecting executive and legislative leadership in the country. These factors encompass both the structural and attitudinal changes described above.[12]

The M-19 fulfilled all of the requirements for a successful transformation from rebel to political party. In 1989, the insurgents nearly unanimously agreed to dismantle their militant wing in favor of a political party. By 1990, the M-19 had developed the AD M-19, a political party organization that fielded candidates for the constitutional convention as well as traditional political offices. Former M-19 insurgents have also described the attitudinal changes that many in the group underwent in the latter half of the 1980s. Many were war weary and disillusioned by the dirty war's mounting cost to the civilian population the group claimed to protect, seeing a clear disjunction between the ends of the leftist guerrilla struggle and the means used to accomplish those goals. Under the leadership of Pizarro, the M-19 recognized peace not as a strategy for the continuation of the military struggle but as an end worthy of pursuit itself. The M-19's resolve to achieve peace was sorely tested when Pizarro was gunned down by a paramilitary assassin. After Navarro took on the mantle of leadership, the M-19 persevered in its transition to a political party.

Like other insurgent groups that have made the transformation, the M-19 faced a number of challenges. The hierarchical decision-making structure of the military organization was inadequate for the dialogue and consensus-building necessary for a political party. One former member described the transition as a difficult one for both Pizarro, accustomed to making unilateral decisions, and the rank and file, accustomed to carrying out directives. However, the M-19 did evidence a culture that could support dialogue-based decision making. For example, when making the crucial decision of whether to disarm in 1989, M-19 leadership used an internal vote, a democratic decision-making mechanism, to make the final decision to disarm. Furthermore, as the AD M-19, the leadership had difficulties incorporating former combatants into the political party. Former insurgents that underwent the transition to AD M-19 reported being insufficiently involved in the political party by M-19 leadership, ultimately resulting in many leaving the organization.

Finally, after taking the helm of AD M-19 after Pizarro's assassination, Navarro attempted to develop a strong popular base through coalition building. The myriad groups that joined the M-19 helped to dilute the character of AD M-19. With this dilution, combined with increasingly individualist political campaigns, the AD M-19 ceased to be a force in Colombian politics. As discussed in the M-19 chapter, however, individual M-19 leaders, such as Navarro, did become successful politicians in their own right. It is important to note that determining the success of an insurgent group's transformation to a political party is not based on the success of the party at the polls. Rather, success is determined by the factors described above. As a result, although the AD M-19 faded into insignificance, it is still an example of a successful transformation.

Unlike the M-19, the FARC's attempt to transition to participation in the legitimate political process in the 1980s was a facade transformation. A facade transformation occurs when an insurgent groups fails to make any significant structural or attitudinal changes to a political party. The insurgent group might erect a political organization, but it acts primarily as a strategic front for receiving support, money, or concessions from the target government. The "facade" political front is designed primarily to further the leadership's military strategies. In a facade transformation, the insurgent group also continues its armed campaign.[13]

The FARC established the UP as part of a peace agreement with President Betancur in 1985. At the time of the creation of the UP in 1985, the FARC leadership intended the party to act as a mechanism for dissemination of propaganda and recruitment. The strategy was part of the FARC's efforts to execute its struggle on multiple fronts. However, the UP did successfully field candidates for political office. Also, under the leadership of Jacob Arenas, the FARC built some of the organizational structure necessary to carry out its political strategies. While the UP fielded candidates for office, the military wing of the FARC continued its armed campaign, eventually leading to a breakdown of the cease-fire. In part, the failure of the FARC to mature its political participation resulted from the highly insecure domestic context in which the transition took place. The paramilitaries, some argue in collusion with the government's security forces, engaged in a concerted campaign to exterminate UP members. The paramilitaries were ultimately successful in derailing the FARC's participation in the political process after assassinating hundreds of UP members. Alongside the death of Jacob Arenas, the FARC's reluctance to pursue further political solutions to the conflict in the 1990s stemmed from this experience.

The next section, *Government Countermeasures*, will detail the government's efforts to combat the leftist guerrilla threat. In the late 1990s, both Colombian and US government officials were concerned that the FARC was on the cusp of defeating the Colombian military and deposing the government in Bogotá. Since a series of countermeasures adopted in the early 2000s, Colombia's security forces' successes have nearly precluded the possibility of a FARC military victory. Nevertheless, after nearly sixty years of struggle, the Colombian security forces are unlikely to wholly eradicate the threat to the country's stability through military force. A negotiated settlement to the conflict, a common trend in the international community today, remains the most likely conclusion to end leftist political violence in the country. Any settlement will require reforms of the Colombian political system that safeguard basic human and political rights, decrease social and economic inequality and corruption, and consolidate state government in all areas of the country. As part of that negotiated settlement, leftist guerrillas will likely transition from armed insurgents to legitimate political parties. The *Conclusion* to this study will review the current negotiation efforts with the FARC under President Juan Manuel Santos.

ENDNOTES

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PART III.

GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

CHAPTER 10.

GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

The Colombian government's response to the leftist insurgencies, the paramilitaries, and narcotrafficking has spanned the spectrum from negotiation to armed offensives. During some periods, the government has applied these varied methods to treat different threats simultaneously. Its policies have shifted between counterinsurgency and counternarcotics programs over the years. The United States is Colombia's greatest ally in its efforts to quell threats to national security, whether from insurgent groups or drug cartels. The United States has supported the Colombian counterinsurgency effort through monetary aid, training, and supplies. The following section discusses the countermeasures each successive presidential administration adopted to address threats to Colombia's national security.

PLAN LAZO AND ITS AFTERMATH (1960–1970)

Alberto Lleras Carmago (1958–1962), Guillermo León Valencia Muñóz (1962–1966), and Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970)

At various points in Colombia's history, assistance from the United States played a crucial role in the Colombian government's efforts to tamp down illegal armed actors operating within its borders. That assistance began as early as the first administration of the National Front government with Plan LAZO. Although only partially implemented, and partially successful, the plan shaped the government's countermeasure policies during this time period. Plan LAZO, adopted in mid-1962, featured a two-pronged carrot-and-stick approach to combatting leftist insurgents such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), and Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL). In addition to these military and socioeconomic strategies, government countermeasures also included the formation of *autodefensa*, or civilian self-defense groups. Despite these efforts, the Colombian government made little progress on addressing the root causes of grievances underlying the leftist insurgency.

The adoption of Plan LAZO was preceded by several missions to survey Colombia's internal security situation. Alberto Lleras Camergo, the National Front's first president, requested assistance from the United States in addressing the threat posed by insurgents groups. The Eisenhower administration responded by initiating the survey missions.

The first survey mission, undertaken in 1959, was overseen by the Department of State, with Department of Defense support. It fielded Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives with wide-ranging experience in irregular warfare. After spending two months in the country,

ranging more than 23,000 kilometers, and meeting with a wide range of societal sectors, the team issued a report assessing the security situation. According to the report, the violence in Colombia mostly originated from greed-based economic motives rather than ideological ones. The so-called guerillas amounted to little more than bandits. The scope of the banditry problem was compounded by poor security and intelligence forces largely incapable of mitigating the violence. The army was largely garrison-bound, while the police faced distrust at best and utter hatred at worse from the public after the trauma of La Violencia. Furthermore, the report noted these conditions were exacerbated by poor economic and social conditions that cultivated grievances among many Colombians.

As a result of these dynamics, the recommendations of the survey team included marrying a military approach with wide-ranging social reforms that sought to undercut the source of public discontent. However, both Colombian and US official policies eventually favored the military approach at the expense of social reform.[1] In 1961, the Kennedy administration sent a special shipment to the Colombian military, one of the first real efforts to assist the Colombian government's efforts to quell internal violence. The shipment included about $1.5 million in military hardware, ranging from communications equipment to small arms, to equip ranger-style units deployed to campaign in the rural countryside.[2]

In 1962, the United States conducted a second survey mission in Colombia. Brigadier General William P. Yarborough led the effort, fielding a US Army Special Warfare Center team on a twelve-day mission to conduct an additional assessment.[3] The recommendations issued by the team encouraged the United States to adopt a more militarized policy to address Colombia's security problems, but also promoted "professionalization of security forces, collaborative intelligence structures, [and] development of rapid reaction capabilities."[4] Subsequent to the survey mission and its recommendations, the Valencia administration formulated an internal defense plan that combined military responses with social reforms.

Colombian military and police officers, assisted by US counterinsurgency mobile training teams (MTTs), developed Plan LAZO to combat the internal violence. Specifically, the plan targeted the Communist guerrillas (eleven enclaves, with 1,600 to 2,000 militants); non-Communist guerrillas (twenty-nine enclaves, with approximately 4,500 militants, although most were inactive); and ninety to 150 bandit gangs (approximately 2,000 bandits) harassing the coffee region in the Cauca Valley. Plan LAZO integrated the command structure of all forces in order to clarify military responsibility in all operations. Furthermore,

the plan called for more versatile tactical units to better respond to irregular warfare. The military also provided resources for social reforms to improve the conditions in poor rural areas to compete with the shadow governance activities of the guerrillas. Psychological operations, aimed at improving civilian attitudes toward the pacification program, were also implemented under the plan. Lastly, the plan also corrected national intelligence deficiencies through restructuring and inculcating an "unconventional" mindset in its agencies.[5] Although the original survey mission reports drew attention to the poor capabilities of the Colombian security forces, the institutions took readily to counterinsurgent techniques. By 1962, around seventy percent of all the military forces had engaged in antiviolence campaigns under the plan. Defense spending and the size of the armed forces increased substantially, from 17,900 personnel and 280 million pesos in 1960 to 59,000 personnel and 520.5 million pesos in 1969.[6] The defense funds were used for military restructuring, creating more mobile tactical units, and public works financing.

Historically, weak infrastructure had precluded a robust state presence in the periphery where many of the armed groups operated. The development of communication infrastructure in the affected regions, such as in the Llanos-Amazonas and on the Pacific coasts, facilitated the integration of the *autodefensa* with the security forces. The technological networks combined with human networks to form "rural civil defense early warning systems" that provided security forces with intelligence and early warnings against guerrilla or bandit attacks. The early warning systems effectively integrated the affected populace, responsible army brigades, the national police, and the air force.[7] The systems leveraged existing institutional social networks, like coffee cooperatives and agricultural groups. The initial success of the systems encouraged their expansion into forty-seven more installations in 1966–1968.[8]

During this period, successive administrations, beginning with Lleras, complemented counterinsurgent strategies with *acción cívica militar*, or military civic activities. Some of the activities took place under Plan LAZO. Others, like the Impact program developed in 1962, were undertaken separately.[9] Through these activities, the government, with the support of the military, hoped to cultivate popular support for its pacification policies and increase government presence in rural areas with traditionally weak state capacity. The Lleras administration established rehabilitation commissions and thirty welfare teams to coordinate efforts to improve living conditions of those affected by violent activity. The rehabilitation commissions, which operated at a national level, tracked programs in designated zones, coordinated relief efforts, and improved access to credit for peasants displaced by the violence.

The welfare teams, which operated at a local level, consisted of a doctor, a nurse, agrarian technicians, an engineer, a veterinarian, a home economist, and sometimes a public administrator. The teams acted as on-the-ground advisors for small, local projects, such as "[building] rural schools, mills, medical facilities, or 'model' farms."[10] In conjunction with the US country team, the military also developed plans to mend violence-ridden regions through social projects. First on an ad hoc basis, but then under the auspices of a presidential decree, the Colombian government developed road infrastructure, health care facilities, literacy programs, and access to potable water, among other activities, in the affected areas.

The government's policies proved initially successful. Many military personnel in Colombia were trained at the US Army School of the Americas in the skills necessary to execute the civic action programs.[11] By 1969, the Colombian government had built 138 road systems; provided medical treatment to 1.1 million civilians and dental care to nearly 900,000; and built forty-four wells, twenty-three health centers, and ninety-nine schools. The evidence is mixed on the impact of these programs on levels of violence in the country. The government conducted a kinetic military campaign concurrently against the guerrillas, so distinguishing the effects of civic action versus the kinetic operations is difficult. The crime statistics during this period did decline, as did participation in criminal bands. A study of the impact of the civic action projects (code name Simpatico) conducted in the late 1960s by the Colombian and US governments did report a positive impact after exhaustive research in the affected areas.[12] However, the projects failed to consolidate a permanent presence in the rural areas, leaving the areas open for insurgent incursions.[13]

These civic action programs, among the first in Latin America, were spearheaded by General Ruiz Novoa. He had served as the second-in-command of Colombia's battalion in Korea. Later, he became minister of war. He was a proponent of the US government's view of the potential of the military as a force multiplier in civic action programs. As his popularity increased, he presented a challenge to the National Front leadership. Eventually, his career, and influence, withered. Ruiz was also instrumental in forming alliances between civilian populations and the military in defense against leftist guerrillas. The *autodefensa* that resulted from his efforts would plague peace in Colombia for decades.

Plan LAZO also led to changes within the intelligence apparatus in Colombia. The resulting enhancement in intelligence capabilities was a force multiplier contributing to the overall success of the early counterinsurgent program. Lleras established the Department of

Security, or DAS, which coordinated all counterintelligence and countersubversive activities among the country's security forces (anti-bandit measures still resided with the National Police), although the restructure fell short of an agency that coordinated and shared all intelligence collection. With the assistance of US MTTs, Colombian intelligence operatives were trained in psychological operations, counterresistance training, interrogation, mobile intelligence groups, and intelligence hunter-killer teams.[14]

Some of President Valencia's counterinsurgent policies would prove controversial. His efforts to combat leftist guerrillas included the adoption of civilian *autodefensa* in 1965, both in the countryside and in urban areas.[15,16] Decades later, these incipient self-defense groups would bedevil the government's efforts to establish a lasting peace. President Valencia also passed a "state of siege" legislation that allowed security forces to arrest civilians for even vague crimes in order to prevent political dissent, strikes, and other nonviolent activity.[17] This state of siege continued over the next twenty-five years, with a widening definition of who could be arrested and punished.[18] Not surprisingly, the public's reaction to these policies was mixed. Many were treated as tacit supporters of leftist movements.

By the late 1960s, the military campaign initiated under Plan LAZO exhausted the newly formed ELN and FARC.[19] The military's earlier successes against troublesome areas encouraged it to take Plan LAZO techniques to the guerrilla's nominally independent "republics."[20] Its most famous offensive, Operation Marquetalia, had driven most of the irregular forces from the self-declared "Republic of Marquetalia" established by future FARC leader Manuel Marulanda Vélez in 1964. Ironically, the operation was the precursor for the founding of the FARC.[21] The Colombian security forces seriously compromised, but did not eliminate, many guerrilla fronts.[22]

Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970–1974) and Alfonso López Michelsen (1974–1978)

Government offensives launched against the guerrillas were so successful during this period that the early 1970s is considered the historical ebb of the leftist insurgency.[23] In a contrast to the government's earlier countermeasures, the country's national security strategy was left largely in the hands of the military. As a result, the focus of the countermeasures was military operations and not guided by any broader state policies or political considerations.[24]

By the early 1970s, the FARC was reduced to only a few marginal fronts,[25] the Colombian military having detained nearly one hundred

guerrillas.[26] Consequently, the FARC's focus was recuperating from the losses it had suffered after the Plan LAZO's offensives. The Colombian military launched several punishing attacks on the ELN, which almost eliminated the group in 1978. At that time, the ELN was left with only thirty armed fighters.[27] The group lost most of its territorial gains, in addition to one of its key members, José Manuel Martínez.[28]

As a result of these successes, the FARC and the ELN retreated to Segovia in Antioquia. The hardscrabble mining town in the mountains of eastern Antioquia offered an ideal sanctuary for the guerrillas. The town was harshly ruled by a traditional armed group affiliated with the Liberal party, the Codfish, a leftover from the horrors of La Violencia. Its workforce, exploited by a multinational mining company, first mixed with the Communist Party (PCC) but later with the guerrillas. The two factions, the dregs of La Violencia and the leftist guerrillas, clashed frequently. Eventually, the guerrillas took control of Segovia. It remained the ELN's headquarters, and later the FARC's, for many years.[29]

The government offensive against the ELN highlighted a troubling trend in Colombian security forces—collusion with paramilitary forces. After suffering numerous defeats, the ELN initiated peace talks with the government. After the military withdrew from insurgent territory, the ELN guerrillas slowly trickled back into the town, retaking control of the town piecemeal and rebuilding the group's support network. Military leaders fumed over the government's naiveté in the peace talk debacle, leading one leader to resign in protest.[30]

In frustration, these same officers later sought extrajudicial, or illegal, ways to eliminate their enemies. They found ready allies among the local population. Years of guerrilla violence had nurtured substantial grievances among some families. One family, the Castaños, had reason enough for its malfeasance— years before, the FARC had killed the head of the family after kidnapping him. The Castaños answered the officers' call to violence and initiated a machete killing spree that left eight to ten dead every week for a month in 1983. The Castaños, along with others in the Segovia region, were among the first in line to join the paramilitary groups as they took shape. Carlos Castaño, alongside his brothers, became the leader of a paramilitary group that helped found the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC).[31]

Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978–1982)

Turbay adopted both offensive and conciliatory countermeasures to internal security threats. He faced a relatively new threat during his administration. The security forces had succeeded in chastising, if not eliminating, the FARC and the ELN. However, a successful new

insurgent group, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), had emerged during the mid-1970s. Upon election, Turbay opted to treat the emergent guerrilla threat with a hard-line approach only briefly punctuated by attempts at negotiation.[32] He handed strategic planning for the country's internal security to the military.

Just four weeks after taking office, Turbay enacted the Security Statute, which granted military and police forces significant leeway in countering subversives. In doing so, the statute significantly restricted civilian rights.[33] The statute was part of a general trend that was apparent over the course of the decade. During this time, the government increasingly relied on ad hoc legal measures to counter leftist insurgents. Many times, the government relied on the implementation of states of emergency:

> Constitutional provisions authorized the president to implement emergency measures, including legislation, in cases of extreme public disorder or war. Executive emergency decrees provided cover for summary executions, permitted the trial of citizens by military courts, and granted the military authority over the civilian population.[34]

Turbay's Minister of Defense, General Camacho Leyva, launched an unrestrained offensive against the insurgency, expanding the government's ability to arrest those suspected of sympathizing with the guerrillas.[35] His administration made permanent many the extraordinary measures previously adopted with the Security Statute. Turbay and Leyva's efforts gave more power to the military than any time since 1958, allowing almost complete military rule with "civilians serving only as figureheads."[36] This campaign not only targeted guerrillas but also strove to reduce recruit pools for the insurgency by targeting civilians.

The M-19 faced the full import of these changes after lifting thousands of weapons from a military weapons depot in Bogotá. Colombian security forces launched a fierce campaign against M-19 and any suspected collaborators in the coming years, arresting and detaining hundreds. The countermeasures sapped the M-19 of much of its strength. By 1979 alone, the government had arrested close to one thousand people.[37] Many were held indefinitely without bail or counsel, tortured, and killed.[38] This harsh stance against civilians carried into the next few years when "search and destroy" tactics displaced thousands of country-dwellers in Caquetá.[39]

Although these measures were meant to turn people away from guerrilla support, as a result of the human rights violations and harsh measures against innocents, they had the opposite effect, and many

turned to joining the insurgency.[40] However, under intense international scrutiny, Turbay's administration responded to the M-19's 1980 hostage barricade operation at the Dominican Embassy with a measure of equanimity, particularly relative to President Betancur's response to the group's occupation of the Palace of Justice several years later. Turbay's administration ended the Dominican Embassy siege through peaceful negotiations with minimal bloodshed. A decade later, M-19 members cited the negotiations as an important contributor to the group's favorable stance toward resolving its armed struggle through a negotiated settlement.

Public outcry over the widespread abuses perpetrated by the police and military under Turbay eventually prompted a search for alternative approaches to end the violence. Turbay's modest conciliatory approach followed the measures discussed above. After negotiations with Congress, he signed an amnesty law in March 1981 (and again in 1982) that gave guerrillas four months to hand themselves over to the authorities.[41] All guerrillas were able to take advantage of the amnesty law, "except those who had participated in 'atrocious crimes' such as kidnapping, extortion, non-combat-related homicide, arson, poisoning of water, and 'in general . . . acts of ferocity of barbarism.'"[42] These excluded crimes included many that formed the basic repertoire of most guerrillas at the time, precluding most insurgents from taking advantage of the law.[43]

In addition to the amnesty, Turbay authorized former President Restrepo to form a peace commission to explore additional measures to quell the internal violence. The findings of the commission included many basic structural reforms, such as agrarian reform, that triggered public grievances. Just months from the end of his term, Turbay failed to implement any of the commission's recommendations. However, a short time before leaving office, Turbay lifted the state of siege, nullifying the Security Statute and the 1982 amnesty. Some political prisoners incarcerated under the nullified measures received commuted sentences or their freedom.[44]

Negotiations: Betancur and Beyond (1982–1986)

Belisario Betancur Cuartas (1982–1986)

In contrast to Turbay, Betancur softened the government's position on the leftist insurgents considerably. Betancur sought alternatives to the failed military-centric approach adopted by his predecessor. Notably, Betancur campaigned on the promise to broaden political participation and initiate a national dialogue to reform Colombian politics. Reincorporating the leftist guerrillas back into society, and into legal

politics, was to be precipitated by a generous, unconditional amnesty. John Aguedelo Ríos, the head of the Peace Commission who Betancur had charged with facilitating the peace negotiations, estimated that the countermeasures the Betancur administration had adopted to mitigate insurgent violence effectively ended ninety-five percent of guerilla activity.[45] However, the peace negotiations were hampered by the government's inability to protect demobilized guerrillas as well as the guerrilla's failure to credibly commit to the process. The problematic relationship between the military and the civilian government also contributed to the breakdown of negotiations.

The Peace Commission established by Betancur actively lobbied for guerrilla amnesty, resulting in Law No. 35, enacted in 1982. The law granted amnesty to "all those in armed conflict with the government before November 20, except those who had committed homicide including 'cruelty,' and those who victim had been in a position of 'inferior strength.' "[46] The amnesty law did not include any requirements for disarmament and paved the way for dialogue among government officials and leftist guerrillas. The Betancur administration sought to engage directly with the guerrillas to discuss cease-fire terms that would facilitate the insurgents' integration into the country's legal political system. Betancur himself met with guerrilla leaders in the presidential palace and in far-flung locations such as Mexico and Spain. Members of his administration also met with guerrilla interlocutors in their remote hideouts. The discussions, however, did not include terms of disarmament, a noteworthy distinction from previous negotiation efforts. Betancur also established two other committees to facilitate the peace process. The Negotiation and Dialogue Commission pursued agreements and terms favorable to both sides, while the Verification Commission monitored violations of the cease-fire agreement.[47]

As a result of these more lenient programs and negotiations, three guerrilla groups (the FARC, EPL, and M-19) signed peace agreements with the government. In the dialogues, the insurgents stressed that the generous amnesty law was merely the beginning. They promised to continue the armed struggle until the administration implemented needed structural reforms. A total of 1,089 guerrillas took advantage of the amnesty terms, including 818 from M-19; 152 from the FARC; and another seventy-five from the ELN. Additionally, several M-19 leaders were released from prison.[48]

The FARC was an early supporter of the peace negotiations. In March 1984, it signed a bilateral treaty with the government at FARC's La Uribe camp in a remote town in the Mesetas Department. FARC agreed to halt all armed activity in its regional fronts as well as all economic extortion activities.[49] The La Uribe Agreement, as the treaty was

known, was in effect from 1984 to 1987.[a] It included "(1) a cease-fire for a period of one year, (2) the creation of a high-level commission to verify the carrying out of the agreement, (3) the granting of a series of juridical, political, and social guarantees in order to facilitate the transition of the guerrilla forces back into democratic life, and (4) a program rehabilitation of the peasant areas affected by the violence."[50] The FARC also announced its intention to form a public component, or political party, the Unión Patriótica (UP). The M-19 and EPL signed similar agreements in the following month. Only the ELN refused to sign agreement with the government.

The peace negotiation process was not without its detractors. Early in the process, the chair of the Peace Commission, former Minister Morales Benitez, resigned in protest. He claimed that "enemies" of the peace process, both inside and outside the government, sabotaged his efforts, although he did not identify any individuals or organizations by name. Additionally, a great deal of violent activity continued unabated during the negotiations. Violence diminished among the insurgent groups that signed the peace agreements, but those insurgents that opted not to participate in agreements, especially those located in rural areas, continued violent operations. Economic extortions, such as kidnappings, still occurred with alarming frequency in many areas.[51]

The death knell of the peace settlements, however, was the murder of scores of amnestied guerrillas by paramilitaries and the slow pace of the promised reforms. The most publicized case was the August 1984 murder of M-19 leader Carlos Toledo Plata near his house in Bucaramanga in the Santander Department. A year later, a grenade attack at a cafeteria in Cali injured another M-19 leader, Antonio Navarro Wolff. Several amnestied ELN and EPL guerrillas were also killed. Both murders were attributed to paramilitary violence. Insurgents, particularly members of the M-19, were also frustrated with the uncertainty surrounding the agreements as well as the slow pace of the Betancur administration in adopting promised structural reforms.[52]

The M-19 also used the negotiations as a strategy to rebuild its armed capability. As part of the peace process, the M-19 retreated to a militarized camp where it used the sanctuary to build their military strength. Under these justified suspicions, the Colombian military attacked the fortified camp, leading to a twenty-five-day standoff between the forces. After engaging in dialogue with the Verification Commission, M-19 retreated to another location, effectively solving the crisis. Several months later, the M-19 organized a conference to be held at its new fortified camp in Los Robles. After government efforts shut

[a] Named for the municipality in which it was signed. Also known as Betancur Agreement or Betancur Initiative.

down the proposed conference, the M-19 accused the Betancur administration of failing to uphold its end of the bargain. Part of the peace agreement with the M-19 had included government promises to initiate "national dialogues" in public areas. By mid-1985, the M-19 declared the cease-fire to be over.[53]

When the M-19 occupied the Palace of Justice, Betancur refused to negotiate the release of scores of hostages held by M-19 in the building. He directed the military to mount a siege against the guerrillas, ultimately a public relations disaster for the government and M-19. The siege, heavily covered by the media, left more than a hundred people dead. Some claim that Betancur's problematic relationship with the military pushed the institution to act as a spoiler during the negotiation process. Betancur's policies had generated a great deal of discontent within the military. He cut the military's budget, decreased its supplies and troops, and failed to consult military leaders on the peace process.[54]

Counternarcotics, Counterinsurgency, and the End of the M-19

Virgilio Barco Vargas (1986–1990)

Both domestic and international factors shaped the Barco administration's stance toward the guerrilla groups. In his first year in office, Barco faced a significant uptick in guerrilla violence despite FARC's adherence to the terms of the peace agreement through much of 1986. Changes in the international system helped contribute to the rise of narcotics trafficking in Colombia. At times, Barco juggled the triple threat presented by leftist insurgents, paramilitary vigilantism, and emergent drug cartels. Despite these difficulties, the administration oversaw a peace process that eventually led to the demobilization of one of Colombia's most active guerrilla groups at the time—the M-19—and the most significant constitutional reform in a century..

In the late 1980s, two important international affairs impacted Colombian countermeasures levied against illegal armed actors within the state. First, as drug production decreased in Bolivia and Peru it (especially the cultivation of coca and poppy) increased in Colombia. Given the lack of uniform government control in the rural, mountainous areas where these drugs were grown and processed, narcotrafficking became a lucrative business for guerrillas and paramilitaries operating in these areas. Second, with the fall of the Communist Soviet Union in 1989, American foreign policy shifted away from containing Communist insurgency as it gained hegemony in the international system. With the Soviet-Communist threat gone, the United States shifted

its assistance to the Colombian government to counternarcotic operations. As a result of these developments, with the help of US-funding, the Colombian security forces began counternarcotic operations in earnest in the 1980s. However, during Barco's administration, much of the counternarcotic efforts shifted to the national police.

Meanwhile, domestic factors helped to shape Barco's conciliatory approach toward the guerrillas. Perhaps most importantly, key actors within Barco's administration actively sought reform. They acknowledged the necessity of altering state institutions to make them better equipped to address the economic, political, and social grievances of the common population historically excluded from the political process. This political will was matched by public support. At this juncture, the war-weary Colombian public was ready to see a negotiated end to the conflict. A public survey conducted at the time showed that 80.4 percent of Colombians preferred negotiations rather than continued war with the guerrillas.[55]

While the Barco administration experienced success in its peace negotiations with the M-19, negotiations with FARC faltered over security concerns and a perceived lack of political will. While the FARC did stay in truce the first year of Barco's presidency, by 1986 they issued a communiqué stating that with seven of its twenty-seven fronts battling troops, they were engaged in a de facto civil war with the government.[56] The FARC negotiator made several related demands necessary for the group to demobilize, most relating to constitutional reform, such as eliminating an article allowing the government to institute a state of siege. By 1987, it was evident that the cease-fire with the FARC no was no longer in force.[57]

In part, the difficulties with the peace agreement stemmed from the numerous threats facing the Barco administration. The administration's attention had turned to the rising power of the Medellín and Cali cartels because of pressure from the United States. In addition, paramilitary groups continued to murder UP members by the hundreds. The government, partially due to a scarcity of resources, had made only weak efforts to rein in the paramilitary vigilantism. Lastly, the government had made no progress on initiating any reforms stipulated in the La Uribe Agreement. Combined, these factors led the FARC to conclude that the political elite was not invested in the peace process.[58] The peace agreement officially unraveled in 1987 after a FARC ambush on a military unit in the Caquetá Department.[59]

An unlikely event, the kidnapping of Alvaro Gómez in 1988, helped spark dialogue between the Barco administration and the M-19 guerrillas. Although technically an act of war, the kidnapping offered a window of opportunity for the two sides to explore the possibility of a

negotiated solution to the conflict as well as establish a relationship of trust. As the negotiations proceeded, M-19's resolute pursuit of peace as a final objective, not as a tactic of war, was likewise met in good faith by the Barco administration.

After months of dialogue between the two factions, in August 1988 Barco attended formal talks with the guerrillas, which included M-19, the FARC, and the ELN. The dialogue resulted in a list of proposals, which included: (1) the necessity of a political solution; (2) a promise to respect human rights and the Geneva Conventions and humanize the conflict and reciprocity from the government in these matters; (3) the willingness of the ELN to suspend bombing of pipelines; (4) constitutional reform; and (5) support of the Unified Central of Labor Unions petitions and general strike. In a departure from the tactics of Betancur, at this juncture Barco required disarmament as a precondition for further talks. Despite the proposal offered to the government, shortly after, in August 1988 in the Córdoba Department, more than 300 FARC and ELN guerrillas ambushed the army and police forces, killing ten soldiers, four policeman, and twenty-five guerrillas.[60]

The following month the Barco administration responded with the Initiative for Peace, a three-phase peace process: (1) an initial détente to decide on the progression of the negotiations; (2) transition, in which cease-fire would be reached and negotiations produce agreement; and (3) incorporation, under which guerrillas lay down arms and become reintegrated into society. In the final stage, the government proposed to grant amnesty while providing a guarantee for safety of former guerrillas. This last measure was especially important to the peace process as paramilitary assassination of amnestied guerrillas marred previous attempts at peace.[61]

While the M-19 responded favorably to Barco's overtures, the FARC, the ELN, and various other insurgent groups remained reluctant to engage in talks with the government. Barco demanded that insurgents willing to engage in negotiations under these terms initiate a cease-fire as a sign of good faith. While the FARC flirted with the idea of negotiations, declaring a truce on a number of actions, the group continued with armed operations. The ELN adopted a more hard-line stance than the FARC. The group steadfastly refused to contemplate further negotiations with the government. However, this decision fostered internal divisions within the group. Several years later, two ELN splinters demobilized.[62]

By mid-1989, the Barco government and M-19 signed the Declaration of Cauca. The declaration signaled the process of reintegration of the guerrilla group. As part of its guarantees for safety, the declaration created an M-19 encampment, Santo Domingo, in the mountains of

the Cauca Department. Although several incidents of violence against M-19 did occur, the intent of the Santo Domingo camp was to protect M-19 from attacks by the Colombian military. Later that year, the government and M-19 signed a pact that led to the demobilization and disarming of the guerrillas over a six-month period. By the following year, 1990, M-19 had symbolically melted down its weapons and offered candidates in upcoming elections.[63]

Unlike his predecessor, Betancur, Barco was adept at managing different actors within his government who might act to spoil the peace process. He actively engaged rightist political figures, working to convince them that political concessions to the guerrillas were necessary for lasting peace. He also worked hand in hand with the military, establishing close cooperation on matters related to the peace process. This likely forestalled the military acting unilaterally to sabotage the process. Barco's efforts in this regard were likely key to keeping the negotiations afloat.[64,b]

César Gaviria Trujillo (1990–1994)

In his inauguration speech, Gaviria called out the four sources of violence plaguing Colombia—guerrillas, narcoterrorists, self-defense groups, and paramilitary groups. For the guerrillas, Gaviria promised dialogue. The common self-defense groups were to receive simple justice. Gaviria, however, reserved the harshest military measures for the narcoterrorists and paramilitary groups."[65]

Gaviria's early negotiations with the guerrillas occurred while Colombian politicians prepared to debate constitutional reform in the National Constituent Assembly. His interlocutor was the Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar (CGSB), or the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Board, an amalgamation of guerilla groups including the FARC, the ELN, the EPL, and others.[c] He dangled a powerful incentive before the CGSB, an opportunity to participate in the reform process. A December 1990 military attack on the Casa Verde, the headquarters of the FARC in the Meta Department, threatened to derail the negotiations. The remaining guerrilla groups returned fire with a series of terrorist assaults, but both sides, for a time, remained nominally committed to the process.[66] The military offensive, however, initiated a series of guerrilla reprisals that eventually soured the negotiations. Symbolically, the offensive was also a disaster, occurring on

[b] Spoiler violence, however, did mar these negotiations as well. Paramilitaries gunned down M-19 leader and presidential candidate Carlos Pizarro Leongómez in 1990.

[c] At its inception, the CGSB included the M-19, which by Gaviria's term had disarmed and demobilized.

the day of the elections for the constituent assembly that was charged with redrafting the constitution.[67]

The Gaviria administration initiated a series of high-level talks held in Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico. The government forwarded a bargaining position similar to that of the previous Barco government—"the acceptance of international supervision over any agreement that might be signed; the inclusion of nongovernmental participants in the conversations; the compliance with certain international protocols, according to the behavior of the guerrilla groups; and the willingness to begin peace talks immediately, without a previous cease-fire."[68]

Early on, the opposing sides had difficulty reaching consensus, but the talks did include discussion on novel mechanisms to halt violence. As in many talks, negotiations stuck on the sequencing of events. For instance, during the first round, the government insisted on a CGSB unilateral cease-fire, while the CGSB countered that it would countenance nothing less than a joint cease-fire. However, government negotiators did consider the novel possibility of establishing "demobilization zones." Under this mechanism, the guerrillas were to successively retreat to fewer and fewer operational zones.[69]

Par for the course, violence between the opposing sides continued while the leaders talked peace. Despite these inauspicious conditions, the government and the CGSB sought common ground that would enable a cease-fire; the participation, whether limited or full, of the CGSB in the National Constituent Assembly; and concerted action against paramilitary and vigilante justice.[70] During the course of the talks, Colombia's new constitution was ratified, lifting the state of siege. Government authorities broadcast demands for the guerrillas to accept the new constitution and cease violence. The call was echoed by now demobilized M-19 leaders who had participated in the drafting of the constitution.

The talks broke down in mid-1991 but were revived in September that year. During this round of talks, government negotiators made several important concessions. The government offered a bilateral cease-fire and changes to the structure of the demobilization zones favorable to the CGSB. One of the most important concerns to the CGSB was the security of its members. Paramilitary organizations continued to present a threat, especially to disarmed and demobilized guerrillas. To mitigate this security risk, the CGSB demanded the government's protection as well as its promise to forcefully demobilize the paramilitaries. The government conceded on these issues. In return, the CGSB demanded that its demobilization zones extend to two hundred towns, nearly a third of the national territory. Government negotiators responded with incredulity. A short time later, guerrillas kidnapped

the president of the lower house of congress, Aurelio Iragorri Hormoza, leading the government to suspend the negotiations despite the CGSB's protestations.[71]

During the next calendar year, 1992, the talks continued but with little hope of success. The CGSB adopted new tactics, which included an intensification of armed operations to pressure the government to concede on economic policy. Gaviria had initiated a series of economic policies that liberalized Colombia's economy, a tack denounced by the Marxist-leaning CGSB. The guerrilla's attempts to draw the government into discussions about Gaviria's economic policies had limited effect. Gaviria's patience drew to a close after the EPL kidnapped another high-ranking politician, Argelino Quintero, who later died in captivity after having a heart attack.[d]

The desultory talks continued for a time after the Quintero kidnapping but with no progress. The government continued to insist on a cease-fire before further substantive and procedural matters could be addressed, while the guerrillas demanded regional, municipal, local, and department-level dialogues before a cease-fire was implemented. After these 1992 talks, Gaviria relied increasingly on a military solution to eradicate guerrilla violence. The EPL's apparently unilateral decision to kidnap Quintero also led to in-fighting among the CGSB. Alfred Cano denounced the operation as "crazy."[72]

Gaviria's negotiations failed to produce concrete results for a number of reasons, including the lingering conviction on both sides that they could still prevail militarily. Both sides also viewed peace much differently. For the government, peace meant the guns stopped firing. In the minds of the CGSB guerrillas, however, peace meant drastic structural adjustments, such as agrarian and economic reform. While both sides claimed to want peace, neither had solid proposals of how that peace was to materialize. The CGSB's positions often amounted to little more than empty slogans. In return, particularly after the drafting of the constitution had concluded, the government had little incentives with which to entice the guerrillas into seriously exploring the possibility of peace.[73]

Gaviria's conviction that his government could win the war against the guerrilla's militarily informed policies implemented to increase the operational capability of the armed forces. To fund his effort, in 1991 the government enacted Decree 416, which established a "war tax" to expand the military to combat domestic violence. This included "additional funds for the intelligence services of the armed forces, the

[d] The People's Liberation Army is a smaller communist insurgency in Colombia that was not a participant in the talks.

creation of two new 'mobile brigades' of fifteen hundred soldiers, as well as patrol companies to protect pipelines, oil fields and mines."[74] In addition to specialized units to combat the guerrillas, the military's strategy also included increasing its aerial capabilities. The military acquired new aircraft, including A-37s, Phantom combat planes, and Black Hawk helicopters. New weapons were also added to the arsenal, such as night vision lenses, lasers, and M-60 machine guns.[75]

During the early 1990s, the mobile brigades became one of the cornerstones of Colombian counterinsurgent efforts. The public was ready for the about-face from negotiations to a military-centric approach after a decade of fruitless peace processes. The mobile brigades were designed and equipped to quickly penetrate the rugged countryside in which most insurgents operated. These brigades also had the advantage of professional, as opposed to draftee, soldiers. Mobile brigade leadership reported not to regional commanders but to the army high command in Bogotá. This facilitated quick pursuit of guerrillas across department lines, whereas previously soldiers were required to request permission to enter adjacent regional commands. The typical mobile brigade strategy was softening target areas with aerial bombardment by the Colombian Air Force, then forcing the guerrillas to flee along corridors already covered by troops. However, despite clear direction to protect civilian populations, according to the Human Rights Watch, the mobile brigades were regularly charged with human rights violations, including indiscriminate killing, rape, and other atrocities. Identifying and punishing the perpetrators was especially difficult as the soldiers' uniforms included no identifying ranks or symbols.[76]

Ernesto Samper Pizano (1994–1998)

President Ernesto Samper Pizano's administration had notably inauspicious beginnings. After being elected, he was charged with accepting campaign money from the Cali cartel. The accusations undermined the legitimacy of his administration, limiting his ability to effectively govern. Samper's subsequent efforts to combat drug cartels aligned with the United States' efforts. While Samper's policies bore fruit in the decapitation of the Cali cartel, his efforts undermined the struggle against leftist guerrillas. In the absence of effective military forces, Samper enabled paramilitaries to continue fighting the guerrillas.

Early in 1994, Samper's Conservative Party opponent, Andrés Pastrana, claimed to have evidence of Samper's cooperation with drug traffickers to fund his campaign. The evidence against Samper included the so-called "narco-cassettes," tapes that Pastrana claimed had hours of recorded conversations between Liberal Party representatives and contacts in the Cali cartel. The Prosecutor General's Office launched

an investigation, unofficially called the "Proceso 8,000." Samper, of course, denied the accusations. At the conclusion of the investigation, Samper was still standing, but his attorney general, defense minister, and campaign treasurer were convicted in relation to the case. The charges, however, complicated Samper's relationship with the United States. He earned the dubious distinction of being the second democratically elected president to be denied a United States visa. Regardless of this troubled relationship, Samper was an ally in the United States' war against Colombian drug cartels.

Despite the corruptness in Samper's regime, under direction from United States' guidance, his administration actively targeted Colombian drug traffickers. The government supported coca spraying in south, combating drug cartels, and replacing National Police commander General Octavio Vargas Silva. The appointment of General Serrano in his place allowed the United States to work directly with the commander, effectively bypassing Samper's administration. After citing lack of progress, the United States decertified Samper' efforts but granted the government a national security waiver to continue receiving aid. In response, Samper initiated a raid that led to the arrest of the Cali cartel leaders.

Like the many-headed hydra, however, Samper's success against the Cali cartel was a boon for FARC. The arrest of the Cali leaders fragmented the drug industry, making it easier for FARC to extort the small-time entrepreneurs. The result was substantially increased revenue for the guerrillas. With assistance from the influx of funds, the FARC expanded its influence in Colombia. Samper redoubled his efforts in light of the United States' rebuff to prove his earnestness in combatting narcotics. His administration, citing the close ties between guerrillas and narcotraffickers, targeted illicit crop production.[77]

The resulting repression against the peasants that relied on the coca economy negatively impacted the legitimacy of the government in affected areas. By mid-1996, reports surfaced of soldiers forcibly removing farmers and burning down their homes. Large-scale protests against the government, sometimes attended by hundreds of thousands of people, ignited in Guaviare Department, the site of many of the abuses. Soldiers killed several protesters. By 1997, this region experienced an uptick in massacres, the deaths of agrarian leaders, and paramilitary violence. The FARC, which had a robust presence in the region associated with its drug trafficking activity, successfully filled the governance vacuum left by the delegitimized state. The guerrillas were the only line of defense against government assaults on their livelihood. FARC guerrillas attacked fumigation planes, offered judicial proceedings,

and expressed solidarity with the struggling peasants.[e] The government's destruction of illicit crops left an army of unemployed youth in its wake, a good number of whom turned to the guerrillas for gainful employment. The FARC developed a plan to increase its number of recruits by specifically targeting areas such as Guaviare Department.[78]

The National Police were at the front lines of the counternarcotic campaigns, while initially the military had little involvement. This emphasis helped to professionalize and train the police forces but failed to prepare the military, Colombia's most capable security force institution, against a growing guerrilla threat fueled by narcotrafficking.[79] The transition of guerrillas from protectors of cocaine processing plants to producers of narcotic products precipitated increased military involved in counternarcotic operations.[f] Despite acknowledged human rights abuses, by 1996 the flow of US military aid to Colombia had resumed. The Colombian military's counternarcotic efforts were not aligned so much with diminishing levels of raw manufacturing products for illicit drugs so much as sabotage of guerrilla finances. In its efforts, the military focused on hotbeds of guerrilla narcoactivity in Putumayo, Guaviare, Caquetá, and Meta Departments. In the mid-1990s, the military's sorties with guerrilla combatants decidedly favored the latter. During this period, the military suffered its worst military defeats against the guerrillas.[81]

This period was the beginning of a new era for the FARC, one in which they were eventually recognized as a viable threat to Colombian sovereignty. Several developments materialized, starting in 1997, which contributed to this perception.[82] The FARC's effectiveness as a fighting force dramatically improved due to increased funding from the drug trade. The rise in capital allowed the group to purchase more sophisticated weapons and equipment, pay for foreigners to come and train their guerrillas, and offer those who joined the ranks higher pay. This in turn led to the FARC's ability to mass large forces, up to 1,500 to 2,000 fighters at a time, which meant that it could conduct larger, conventional engagements with the Colombian military.[83] In some cases, the FARC's weaponry was even more sophisticated than that of the military.[84] The ineptness of the Colombian military was an additional factor that enabled the FARC to present a greater threat to the government.[85] The rank and file of the Colombian military was conscripts. Moreover, in a country where the financial dichotomy between the cartels and soldiers and police is so great, much of the leadership became corrupted. The military's frontline strategy in handling the FARC expansion was

[e] Notably, however, the FARC, like the government, lacked viable economic alternatives to illicit crop production.

[f] Interestingly, however, Vargas notes that at the time the FARC was not involved in international drug trafficking or "bringing cocaine and heroin into the United States."[80]

allying with paramilitaries and large landowners to do the heavy lifting. The paramilitaries committed gross human rights abuses, including terrorizing and murdering civilians with impunity.[86]

Samper's policy toward the paramilitaries reflected tension between reliance on the groups and international pressure directed against the paramilitaries' human rights abuses. Evidence provided by the testimony of civilians and nongovernmental organization (NGO) leaders points to collusion among paramilitaries, local government officials, and the police. Reportedly, the paramilitaries also received logistical and materiel support from the military, large landowners, cattle ranchers, and businesses.[87] Gaviria had first legalized the self-defense groups with Decree 356. Samper expanded the mission of the groups under Resolution 368 in 1995, establishing the Servicios Especiales de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada (CONVIVIR), or Special Vigilance and Private Security Services. CONVIVIR groups were ostensibly to provide intelligence and security in rural areas. The considerable weaponry that CONVIVIR groups were allowed to field by law suggests more lethal missions—mini-Uzi machine guns, repeating rifles, and revolvers. In many cases, CONVIVIR groups acted much like paramilitaries, murdering families and terrorizing citizens. Moreover, known paramilitary members migrated to the CONVIVIR groups. The constitutionality of the groups was challenged, but confirmed, in 1997, although the groups were prohibited from being issued military-grade weapons.[88]

As human rights abuses perpetrated by the paramilitaries mounted, so too did pressure on the Samper administration to forcefully address the groups. He established special human rights investigative units and brought some paramilitary members to justice. Decree 2895 also proposed forming a national police bloc with the express intent to seek out and destroy paramilitary squads. Other measures included a $500,000 reward for information leading to the capture of paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño. The international ramifications of the paramilitaries' abuses were not inconsequential. US law, under the Leahy Amendment, precludes the American government from providing assistance to forces involved in human rights abuses.[89] The Samper administration considered, and then rejected, negotiations after continued paramilitary massacres.[90]

Plan Colombia

Andrés Pastrana Arango (August 7, 1998–August 7, 2002)

Colombia entered a different era at the time of Pastrana's election. Increasingly, the United States exercised its strategic and economic interests in the region through the Colombian government. Colombia's

ongoing economic troubles, escalating drug trafficking, and widespread insurgency presented an opportunity for expanded US influence in the country. The result was Plan Colombia, a multi-billion-dollar aid package designed to increase security in the country. Initially, Plan Colombia directed aid toward counternarcotic efforts but within several years transitioned to include counterinsurgent support as well. Internally, the Pastrana administration and the military adopted different postures toward combating organized political violence in the country. Pastrana sought peace through a novel mechanism in Colombian peace negotiations—a demilitarized zone for FARC. The Colombian military, meanwhile, operated in the absence of policy guidance from the Pastrana administration. As the security force responsible for combatting the violence, the military reassessed its posture toward FARC, adopting a counterinsurgent model that brought some gains against the group. To support its efforts, the military also initiated institutional reforms that helped set the state for the relative success of Pastrana's predecessor, Uribe, against FARC.

Negotiations and Zona de Despeje

The initial proposals for the demilitarized zone, or *zona de despeje*, began in an unlikely setting.[g] During the 1998 presidential campaign, three candidates faced a runoff. To break the deadlock, Andrés Pastrana Arango, the former mayor of Bogotá, engaged with FARC.[91] He hoped to begin a series of peace talks, perhaps reminiscent of the demilitarization of M-19. Pastrana sent an envoy, Victor Ricardo, to meet with Marulanda and Mono Jojoy. Ricardo informed them that if Pastrana won the election, he would engage in peace talks and would create the demilitarized zone that the FARC previously requested.[92] Shortly thereafter, FARC spokesman Raúl Reyes announced their support for Andrés Pastrana. Pastrana subsequently won the election.[93]

On July 9, 1998, less than a month before his inauguration, President-elect Pastrana met with FARC leaders Marulanda and Mono Jojoy. They agreed to five points:

1. Four municipalities in the department of Meta and one in Caquetá would be demilitarized.
2. The government of Colombia would fight the paramilitaries, which represented a significant threat to the FARC.
3. Protests and demonstrations would no longer be criminalized.
4. Alternative crops would be developed for coca farmers.
5. The government would stop employing wanted posters and financial incentives to obtain information on FARC leaders.[94]

[g] The demilitarized zone is also known colloquially as Farclandia.

The demilitarized zone was officially established on November 7, 1998. Originally agreed upon for a period of only ninety days, the FARC would ultimately maintain control of this region, an area the size of Switzerland, until February 20, 2002.[95]

The FARC, believing they had the advantage in the subsequent peace talks, agreed to participate but refused to initiate a cease-fire. After only eighteen days, the FARC walked away from the table after demanding that the Pastrana administration clamp down on Colombia's paramilitaries.[96] Shortly after the talks began, the paramilitaries mounted an offensive, killing 140 civilians over a period of several days. In response, the FARC demanded government action against the paramilitaries before the guerrillas would return to the talks. Pastrana dismissed two generals involved in paramilitary activity in April 1999. Two more were discharged or resigned during the coming year.[97]

At the outset, a trend emerged in the peace process that would continue through the *despeje* period. Peace talks would be preceded by FARC attacks in an attempt to strengthen the FARC's position while weakening the government's. Some argue that the FARC was not serious about engaging in peace but used the *despeje* as a sanctuary to build its operational capacity.[98]

Nevertheless, the two parties agreed to reinitiate dialogue in Switzerland in February 2000. As in the past, each side's vision of peace was notably dissimilar. For the government's part, it simply wanted guerrilla violence to end. FARC negotiators, by contrast, demanded greater employment, education, and health care for Colombians as part of their vision of peace.[99] In an amusing, if ill-fated tactic, government negotiators arranged a trip outside of Colombia for the hardened FARC leadership to alter their perspective. However, they underestimated Marulanda's dedication. Not only had "Sureshot" been living in the jungle since the 1940s, he had not been to the movies since World War II and had never seen the ocean.[100] More importantly, he had not forgotten the UP debacle that was the FARC's last attempt at a political solution. After twenty-three days of fruitless talk and tourist shopping, the guerrillas burned their clothes to ensure that they could not be followed with embedded tracking devices.[101] Then, they returned to the jungle.

While talks stuttered with the FARC, a separate track also engaged the ELN. A month before Pastrana's inauguration, German civil society groups arranged talks between the president-elect and the ELN. The original intent of the talks was to discuss the government transition and the status of peacemaking. During the course of the talks, the ELN forthrightly stated that it could not halt its kidnapping activities without developing economic alternatives. Although the discussion

concluded without any substantive agreements, the ELN made a symbolic gesture by agreeing to halt kidnapping of pregnant women or those seventy-five and older. The talks gained little momentum, especially after Pastrana became involved in the peace talks with FARC. Ricardo admitted to affording scant attention to the ELN, believing that the ELN would follow the FARC's lead in any peace agreement the latter made with the government.[102] Portions of the Colombian population were staunchly opposed to Pastrana's approach. When he attempted to establish a *despeje* for the ELN, the citizenry in the affected area vigorously protested.[103]

Counterinsurgency and Intragovernmental Divisions

One of the challenges in crafting effective countermeasures during the Pastrana administration was the rift between Pastrana and the military. While the Pastrana administration was invested in peace negotiations with FARC, the military continued an armed campaign against the group. The Pastrana administration gave little policy guidance to the military on combating the violence. Most security issues were left to the army, the Ejército Nacional, or COLAR; the navy; and the air force. Part of its campaign included new assessments of FARC's vulnerabilities.

Military leadership identified two key FARC vulnerabilities to exploit, insurgent units and its sources of support. Popular support for FARC continued to decline, making the mobility corridors and base areas especially important for moving needed supplies to insurgents. The military's successes included halting FARC's attempt to transition to a conventional force.[104] The *despeje* was central to this attempted transition as FARC used it as a staging ground for attacks by "strategic columns comprised of multiple battalion-strength units." In part, the military's gains against the FARC resulted from a key trio of military leaders learned in counterinsurgency strategies. Together, they were responsible for developing annual military campaign plans that put FARC on the defensive. However, until the military's efforts were nested in a broader national plan under Uribe, they had limited efficacy.[105]

The basic framework for Colombia's counterinsurgency efforts during this period included the geographical assignment of five COLAR divisions and a joint task force with a division-strength national reaction force. Around 20,000 of the 145,000 soldiers belonged to volunteer counterguerrilla units part of the brigades and divisions. The all-volunteer units made up forty-seven counterguerrilla battalions (*batallones contraguerrillas*, or BCG) and three mobile brigades (*brigades movile*, or BRIM), each composed of four additional BCGs. The regular formations that accounted for the rest of the COLAR were mostly draftees.[106]

A cornerstone of the military's campaign against the FARC, a clear-and-hold strategy, was hampered by institutional constraints. When territory was cleared of insurgents, holding the territory was difficult. The BCG and BRIM were used to strike targets. Both units were manned with volunteers, increasing the professionalization of the force. However, once the territory was cleared, regular draftee units were used to hold territory. These regular units were frequently rotated to keep FARC off balance. The military lacked local, home guards to hold cleared territory as legal restrictions had dissolved previous local forces.[107]

Military Reform

Military leadership also reflected on its institutional shortcomings. The difficulties the Colombian military experienced at the hands of the guerrillas under Samper had galvanized a new generation of officers to rethink and restructure the institution. The officers, trained alongside Colombia's other armed groups, initiated a study of the force.[108] The study highlighted a number of important deficiencies. It found that the armed forces rarely coordinated with one another. Most of the military's efforts concentrated on protecting infrastructure, a favorite FARC target, such as power lines, bridges, and dams.[109] Most damning was the observation that, although it faced an insurgency, the Colombian military had almost no intelligence, especially no operational intelligence capability.[110] When captured, FARC guerrillas were often either executed or thrown in prison and forgotten.[111] The military had no operatives inside the FARC and had no real understanding of its organizational structure.[112]

The institutional assessment led to reforms initiated by senior military leadership that helped set the stage for Pastrana's successor. The reforms included transitioning the forces to include greater numbers of volunteer, as opposed to a draftee, soldiers. Eventually, a third of the military's soldiers entered as volunteers, not draftees. Moreover, units considered key to defeating insurgents transitioned to a one-hundred-percent volunteer force. Military education was also revitalized, helping to professionalize the force and also capture lessons learned into operational and organizational modifications. The reforms cultivated noncommissioned officer (NCO) leadership to enhance small-unit leadership. Other reforms included greater attention to human rights instruction, information operations, and joint and special forces operations.[113]

Plan Colombia

One of the most important developments during Pastrana's administration was the onset of Plan Colombia. The plan, originally designed

internally by the Colombian government, was meant to address the country's security and socioeconomic problems.[114] Shortly thereafter, with the support of the Clinton administration in United States, Plan Colombia transitioned to a bilateral assistance program. The US stance altered during the Clinton administration after FARC murdered three American citizens in March 1999. FARC military successes led US observers to believe that the FARC was a serious threat to Colombian sovereignty. A weakened or defeated government would only exacerbate the drug problem.[115]

Initially, due to domestic political considerations, the United States restricted its support solely to counternarcotic efforts.[116] The artificial separation between the insurgency and drug trafficking severely hindered the efficacy of the plan. The measures of effectiveness used to track the utility of Plan Colombia provide ample evidence of this failure. Rather than using measures that directly tracked the impact of operations on insurgent capabilities, officials instead tracked the hectares of coca fields that were eradicated. It is unclear what impact, if any, eradication efforts had on insurgent capabilities.[117] The United States, alongside Pastrana officials, pressured military leadership to adopt a counternarcotics-driven strategy. Colombian military leadership refused, instead continuing to focus on the insurgency as the center of gravity. After 9/11, the United States shifted its counternarcotic policies in Colombia to policies that recognized the insurgent component of the conflict.

By 2009, under Plan Colombia, the United States had provided more than eight billion dollars in aid. A common misperception is that Plan Colombia bankrolled the Colombian military. In fact, the plan represented only about six percent of Colombia's defense budget.[118] After the United States altered its policies to include counterinsurgent support, funding was supplied to the Colombian military in its fight against the insurgents. However, with links between the military and the *paras* clearly established, it is inevitable that some of this money found its way into the AUC's hands. Foreign companies operating in Colombia also contributed to the funding of the paramilitaries. For example, Cincinnati-based Chiquita, the banana grower, admitted to paying illegal armed groups in Colombia for security purposes. US court documents indicate that the Justice Department had known about the Chiquita paramilitary link since April 2003, yet the banana growers continued payments for another ten months.[119]

Aid packages to the Colombian government under Plan Colombia helped the government to address a number of pressing issues. For instance, the initial aid package allocated $519 million for military assistance, $123 million for police assistance, $68.5 million for alternative

development, $51 million to bolster respect for human rights, $45 million for law enforcement, $37.5 million to aid to the displaced, $13 million for judicial reform, and $3 million for peace objectives. Around $417 million of the military assistance was channeled toward the strategic southern Colombia region. Around $328 million of the total military assistance also purchased helicopters, including sixteen UH-60s Blackhawks and thirty UH-IH-Hueys. However, Plan Colombia placed a cap on United States' forces at five hundred plus three hundred contractors, except in the case of intense hostilities. With the addition of the funds under Plan Colombia, the country became the second largest recipient of U.S. military assistance after South Korea.[120]

While the funds from Plan Colombia rolled in, Pastrana was still pursuing peace with the FARC in the *despeje*. He was perhaps the last person to concede that neither the peace talks nor the *despeje* were working. Until 2002, he held out hope that an agreement could be reached. Several events signaled the death knell of the peace process, beginning with the FARC hijacking of a civilian aircraft. Pastrana also received intelligence that the FARC was growing coca in the *despeje*. And, finally, the FARC kidnapped Senator Eduardo Gechem, president of the Senate's Peace Commission.[121] After these revelations, Pastrana dismantled the *despeje* on February 20, 2002.[122] The military's repossession of the *despeje* in February 2002 would not have occurred without Plan Colombia.[123]

Democratic Security and Defense Program and Integrated Action (2002–2009)

Álvaro Uribe Vélez (August 7, 2002–August 7, 2010)

Uribe ran his presidential campaign on a political platform that prescribed tougher measures against illegal armed groups. His election signaled that the Colombian population supported a tougher stance against the guerillas, even if it meant introducing emergency powers and the erosion of basic political rights. Like many allies of the United States at the time, Uribe couched his security strategy in the new "war-on-terror" framework.[124] The main thrust of Uribe's security policies included increasing the scope, strength, and legitimacy of Colombian state institutions to deprive FARC of the advantages weak states offer insurgents. Uribe needed resources and a legal framework to bring his policies to fruition. Ultimately, the countermeasures taken under Uribe's leadership seriously hampered FARC's operational capabilities, but critics continue to question the "success" of the efforts.

Uribe's election signaled support from political elite to take a hard-line approach against the FARC. While the FARC enjoyed sanctuary in

the *despeje*, it developed the operational capability to bring the fight to major urban centers such as Bogotá. FARC also kept wealthy families imprisoned in urban centers, fearful of kidnapping extortion. This Colombian political class makes up about thirty-seven percent of the population and is primarily of European descent. Throughout much of the conflict, just as it had been during La Violencia, this class was shielded from much of the violence. After being more exposed to the violence under Pastrana, the elite became a "credible partner" in the struggle against FARC after supporting Uribe's election. Most importantly, the wealthy elites opened their pocketbooks. To finance his campaigns, Uribe levied a war tax against the wealthy, who paid nearly four billion dollars over a four-year period. That is about half of assistance provided by the United States under Plan Colombia.[125]

Uribe, along with the military,[126] unveiled a comprehensive program in 2003, the Democratic Security and Defense Policy (DSP), to defeat leftist insurgents.[127] The FARC had laid out the welcome mat for Uribe at the beginning of his tenure as president. The group attacked the presidential palace the day before his inauguration in August 2002. Twenty people were killed and sixty were wounded in the attack.[128] In contrast to Pastrana's countermeasures, Uribe's policy united efforts across the whole of government to focus efforts on the diverse conditions underlying the long-running insurgency in Colombia. The policy rested on three central tenets:

1. Lack of personal security is the root of Colombia's social, economic, and political ills.
2. This lack of personal security stems from the state's absence from large swaths of national territory.
3. Therefore, all elements of national power need to be directed toward ending this lack of national integration.

Notably missing in the DSP is any language regarding peace negotiations. Instead, the DSP requires insurgents to cease all hostilities before any negotiations or demobilizations can be discussed.[129] However, these policies did not apply to the paramilitary groups, with whom Uribe did negotiate and provide a legal framework for demobilization.

The plan also recognized the threat as stemming from combined dynamics of terrorism; drug trafficking; illicit finance; traffic of arms, ammunition, and explosives; kidnapping and extortion; and finally, homicide. Uribe's policy first and foremost identified Colombia's insecurity problems originating from FARC's revolutionary insurgency, not from the tactics adopted by the group to fulfill its strategic goals, such as drug trafficking. FARC was an insurgency that used drug trafficking to finance its operations, not the other way around.[130]

At the heart of Uribe's policy was the protection of the population from violence perpetrated by leftist insurgents and the paramilitaries. It defines security as "the permanent and effective presence of the democratic authorities across the national territory as a result of a collective effort of the whole society."[131] One of the key strategies to achieve this goal was the consolidation of national territory. Uribe's plan called for the state to gradually restore its presence and the authority of its institutions in strategically important areas. It began with the military clearing territory of insurgents, then local forces and police holding the territory from further incursions.[132]

Unlike the military's similar efforts under Pastrana, executive guidance from Uribe under the DSP provided a framework to streamline security efforts. The Ministry of Defense, for instance, did not draft plans unilaterally as it had under Pastrana. Instead, the Ministry of Defense drafted a plan designed to implement Uribe's policy. In turn, the Ministry of Defense's plans informed those of the military's Joint Command and the national police. The products streamlined the efforts of all security forces against the FARC and other leftist insurgents throughout Uribe's term in office.[133]

Uribe's plan recognized that a lasting victory over the guerrillas required more than a military solution. As part of the DSP, Uribe sought to incorporate "institutional protection of citizens' rights, guarantees of justice, and the rule of law." These protections and guarantees were expected to strengthen the confidence of the public in state institutions, thereby bolstering state legitimacy while discrediting the nondemocratic alternatives the guerrillas represented. However well intentioned, Uribe's policies privileged security over human rights at times, leading critics in many corners to cite government abuse. Moreover, security forces were charged with gross human rights violations that some argue pointed to systemic, not incidental, issues.[134]

Resourcing the Counterinsurgent Campaign

Uribe needed additional resources to carry out his policies, which he acquired through two avenues: a war tax and Plan Colombia. The war tax, levied on the liquid assets of the wealthy, contributed about four billion dollars to the defense budget over a four-year period.[135] The revenue from the tax was used to increase the number of soldiers available for the resource-intensive counterinsurgent campaign. By 2004, the military expanded to 202,000.[136]

Uribe also required a revised legal framework to carry out his policies. He first addressed this issue by allowing government forces to make arrests without warrants and established other measures of control where and when they were needed.[137] The 1991 constitution allowed

for three successive ninety-day periods of a state of emergency during which the government could exercise additional powers.[138] To supplement these measures, the Uribe administration enacted new legislation in April 2003 modifying the constitution, granting the government the ability to tap phones and conduct warrantless searches as needed.[139]

Implementing the DSP

When it came time to implement the plan, Uribe benefited from trends began under Pastrana. Military reforms, initiated internally by senior military leadership, had left the military more prepared to undertake an intensive counterinsurgent campaign. Due to educational efforts, the existing officer corps had greater professional knowledge of the general operational and tactical components of warfare, but also a more robust insight into the strategic components of insurgent warfare. In general, members of the military were more apt counterinsurgent strategists then they had been in the past. The operational plan guiding the military's counterinsurgent activities was the Joint Command's Plan Patriota (Plan Patriot).[140]

The military had already started to craft a counterinsurgent campaign in the previous administration. Uribe simply brought the resources and political will necessary to carry out existing strategies. Plan Patriot sought to take the fight to the guerillas, targeting high-value FARC targets and pushing guerrillas from their strongholds in southern and eastern Colombia. After securing the area, the military was to hand over control of the area to civilian leadership to help consolidate the state's presence. The tactics developed to achieve the goals included laying down a "grid" over the area and coordinating efforts among various forces to stifle insurgent activity.[141] Security forces first gathered intelligence on FARC camps and leaders. Once a target was identified, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters bombed the site "to soften defenses, disorient the defenders and kill as many guerrillas as possible." After the initial sortie, special operations soldiers were deployed to the area to kill and capture remaining combatants. Computers, flash drives, cell phones, and other types of intelligence were also gathered and analyzed.[142]

Additional unfunded, but planned, changes were executed after Uribe secured revenues with the war tax. Part of the plan was manning new BCG and BRIM units, giving every division a BRIM. Urban special forces were also developed to complement existing rural special forces. The FARC's use of mountainous terrain also necessitated additional high-mountain battalions situated and equipped to block insurgent mobility corridors. The plans bolstered infrastructure and special transportation network units.[143]

Under Pastrana, the military lacked local forces necessary to hold cleared territories. They were disbanded after a constitutional court found them illegal. Uribe, however, made use of a forgotten loophole that allowed a portion of conscripted soldiers to fulfill service obligations in their hometowns. The local forces Uribe was able to marshal under this law became the linchpin of the grid system. By the mid-2000s, the local forces were present in around six hundred locales around the country.[144] Although assigned and trained with a battalion or brigade, after three months of basic training the soldiers returned to their local villages or towns. Initially, the soldiers served by day and returned home at night. Shortly after forming the local forces, leftist insurgents targeted the soldiers and their families for retaliation. As a result, many were eventually stationed in hastily constructed military bases in the village areas and commanded by NCOs.[145] By August 2004, more than eight thousand of these *campesino* soldiers were recruited and trained. While the plan called for the recruitment and training of 32,376 *campesino* soldiers by 2006, in 2009 the actual number hovered around 25,202.[146]

Police forces also supplemented the manpower needed to hold cleared territory. In many areas controlled by the insurgents, the police were entirely absent. The government was able to expand police presence to every *municipo* (county) in the country by 2006, installing them in fort-like police stations if necessary.[147] The police patrol rural areas and disrupt mobility corridors used for gun and drug running. Police were trained in counterinsurgency tactics and to coordinate with the army. In part, the expansion of the police was driven by thousands of new recruits. Others claim, however, that in some cases the expansion resulted from dispersing existing police officers over greater areas of jurisdiction.[148]

The government's security efforts also involved recruiting civilians to act as an informant network. Many of the collaborators in the network report suspicious activity to the military without compensation. Informants, on the other hand, are paid for information on insurgent activity that leads to the capture of insurgents or interdiction of hostile activity. Not surprisingly, many of these informants are former insurgents or members of irregular armed groups. The military keeps lists of the network with no supervision by civilian state institutions.[149]

Consolidation Phase and Integrated Action

In 2004, the Colombian government, with support from the United States, developed a plan combining military and development projects carried out in the same areas. The primary thrust of the plan was to consolidate military gains through developing more robust civilian

state institutions in the territory. It has gone by a number of different names, including Integrated Action, Plan Colombia 2, and Strategic Leap. Hereafter, the plan will be called Integrated Action. In part, the plan originated in the frustrations of both the Colombian government and the United States in its seeming inability to effectively hold territory after clearing it of insurgents, whether in the Colombian countryside, Iraq, or Afghanistan. The Colombian Ministry of Defense and the civil affairs section of the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), part of the US Military Group in Bogotá, recommended that the Ministry of Defense establish an interagency group "capable of synchronizing national level efforts to reestablish governance."[150] Uribe accepted the proposal, creating the Coordination Center for Integrated Action (CCAI).[151]

The initial planning sessions later in 2004 developed a three-pronged approach addressing security, economic, and development in conflicted areas to improve governance. In 2009, the strategy was implemented in thirteen zones throughout the country. After Uribe's election for a second term in 2006, the plan gained momentum. His new minister of defense, Juan Manuel Santos, described the overall strategy of Integrated Action:

> It means state institutions' entry or return to zones affected by violence to satisfy the population's basic needs, like health, education and public service, as well as justice, culture, recreation and infrastructure projects.[152]

While the security forces are initially important for security, civilian state institutions must quickly, and in a coordinated fashion, move into affected zones to consolidate a state presence. The CCAI, on paper, follows a sequenced-phased strategy that moves from military operations to quick social and economic assistance to gain popular support then lastly to a functioning civilian government. The CCAI outlined different phases of consolidation, each associated with a different color for ready identification:

- Territorial control phase (red): areas with presence of armed groups
- Territorial stabilization phase (yellow): areas under state control but still in institutional recovery
- Territorial consolidation phase (green): areas stabilized and continuing intense effort to establish state institutions and public services.[153]

The nonmilitary efforts of Integrated Action seek quick wins alongside long-term development. Initially, a great deal of effort goes to

small development projects with noticeable results such as soccer fields, playground renovations, and repainting infrastructure. The idea of the quick win is to rapidly build trust between local communities and their governments. However, the quick wins do not necessarily address the long-term socioeconomic needs of the community.[154]

The CCAI coordinates the activities of fourteen state institutions. These institutions include the military, judiciary, cabinet departments, and others. The CCAI is under the leadership of the Consejo Directivo (Directive Council), composed overwhelmingly of members from the security forces. However, the Comité Ejecutivo (Executive Committee) established to coordinate and advise, but without any real leadership role, includes staff from the full spectrum of government, including from the ministries of agriculture, social protection, interior and justice, education, mines and energy, transportation and environment, housing and development, and others. After security forces clear an area of illegal armed activity, the interagency board enters the area, although a heavy military leadership and presence is usually still required. The CCAI attempts to ease the interagency activity from its office in Bogotá, fielding requests for resources from various ministries, for instance. The United States supports Integrated Action through SOUTHCOM and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).[155]

By 2009, the CCAI established satellite offices in five regions targeted for Integrated Action efforts. These small offices were first called "fusion centers" because they sought to fuse the many agencies involved in the areas. Each center has a military coordinator, a police coordinator, and a civilian manager. The civilian manager is ultimately responsible for administering the efforts in coordination with local and regional authorities.[156]

While the Colombian government and USAID declared success in areas with fusion centers, other reports suggest more mixed results. In 2009, the Center for International Policy visited fusion centers in La Macarena (located in close proximity to Bogotá) and the Montes de María (located near the Caribbean coast outside Cartagena). In La Macarena, once a booming narco-town, security gains were not as dramatic as had been reported by government officials.[h] While FARC had been driven from the immediate town, travel even three miles outside it on tertiary roads was highly discouraged.[158]

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[h] In 2008, Minister of Defense Santos claimed of the La Macarena zone, "The people now reject the FARC in all of its manifestations, defend the state and support the security forces. They are seeing that after being submitted for so long to FARC's violence, now, hand-in-hand with the state, progress and development is arriving."[157]

Within the area, some peasants who were interviewed shared stories of government behavior that led to the community's increased distrust of the state. Some families, for instance, had signed agreements to voluntarily eradicate their coca crops in exchange for development assistance. The day the agreements were to be implemented, fumigators eradicated the coca crops, leading the families to cease contact with state institutions. In other examples, promised assistance simply failed to materialize. Some families resorted to sending their children to the guerrillas still hiding out in the mountains to secure a stable food source for them. An unexpected government agency, the National Park Service, has made good headway in encouraging voluntary crop eradication efforts in La Macarena, although these efforts have been hampered by inadequate infrastructure in delivering promised aid.[159]

The security environment in the Montes de María differed from that in La Macarena. While the latter had been a FARC stronghold and part of the *despeje*, conflict between paramilitaries and leftist guerillas had torn apart the area in the Montes de María. The high levels of violence there led many local residents to flee to safer locales. After the military made headway in calming the violence, displaced residents, mostly farmers of small farms, began to return. After returning, many had difficulties making their holdings productive. The violence had forced some to abandon their land for years. As a result, many sold their land or suffered foreclosure. Land grabs by wealthy businessmen, narcotraffickers, and others proceeded at such a rapid pace that President Uribe himself urged the farmers to stop selling their land. The CCAI and the fusion centers in the Montes de María focused their efforts on preventing further degradation to land ownership, the foundation for survival of many, in the area. However, the Center for International Policy reports that the efforts of the CCAI have been ineffective in correcting the conditions leading to land sales and preventing illegal sales in the Montes de María.[160]

AUC Negotiations

Uribe had made a hard-line approach to the FARC the signature platform of his election campaign. His policy toward the right-wing paramilitaries differed considerably. This is not surprising as the paramilitaries are not a direct threat to the security of the state. Paramilitary violence is directed primarily at guerrilla groups themselves and especially the civilian population that supports them. However, the insecurities arising from the paramilitaries' scorched earth tactics, such as civilian massacres, provided ample justification for the continuation of FARC's armed struggle.

Early in his tenure, Uribe made a series of decrees and laws designed to incentivize the demobilization of paramilitaries.[161] He refused to negotiate with groups that had not first agreed to a cease-fire. The combination produced results for Uribe. In December 2000, the AUC declared a cease-fire. By July 2003, the Uribe government and the AUC signed the Sante Fe de Ralito Accord, which committed the paramilitary to a cease-fire and demobilization.

The cornerstone of paramilitary demobilization was the Justice and Peace Law. The law, passed by the Colombian congress at the urging of Uribe, gave paramilitary fighters conditional amnesty. The conditions required demobilized fighters to document their crimes, forfeit any illegally acquired assets, and make reparations to their victims. In exchange, the former paramilitary members received no more than eight years in prison, a shorter term than usually granted for murder, kidnapping, and other crimes. Opponents of the law argued that the lenient sentences amounted to impunity, but Uribe countered that it was likely that harsher sentences would be insufficient incentive for the paramilitaries to demobilize and disarm.[162]

By 2007, more than 31,000 AUC soldiers had demobilized under the auspices of the Justice and Peace Law.[163] But, the numbers of demobilized soldiers far outstripped previous estimates of paramilitary numbers. Some believe that drug traffickers and other criminals took advantage of the legal demobilization process to escape prosecution. Other scenarios include individuals demobilizing to acquire the social and monetary benefits afforded to demobilized fighters.[164]

Most worrisome is the failure of the demobilization program to successfully dismantle paramilitary organizational infrastructure. In 2007, an estimated three thousand demobilized soldiers were recruited by as many as twenty-two new paramilitary organizations. Furthermore, the low proportion of weapons decommissioned to demobilized fighters implies that paramilitaries are caching weapons for future use.[165] Paramilitary revenues also continue to increase, mostly from drug trafficking. Analysts speculate that before the negotiated amnesty, the paramilitaries exported massive quantities of stockpiled cocaine knowing that whatever was sold prior to the conditional amnesty would escape prosecution. Since the demobilization, the Colombian government has done little to halt paramilitary violence.[166]

ELN Negotiations

In addition to talks with the AUC, Uribe also initiated formal peace talks with ELN in 2005. The talks, held in Havana, were preceded by the release from prison of ELN leader Gerardo "Francisco Galán" Bermúdez. Bermúdez was confined to a *casa de paz* or peace house,

established by the government in Medellín. The peace house served as the site for peace discussions with civil society leaders and the international community. A total of eight rounds of talks followed, with Mexico acting as a facilitator. More formal dialogues also included Norway, Switzerland, and Spain. During the talks, ELN continued its military operations, although as in the case of the FARC, Uribe's security initiatives degraded the group's operational capabilities. As has been the case for many of failed peace talks over the past forty years, the conditions for a cease-fire stymied the talks, producing no tangible gains for either side.[167]

Counterinsurgency Success?

The Uribe administration's concerted counterinsurgent efforts against the FARC did severely degrade the group's operational capabilities. The group's membership halved, diminishing from seventeen thousand to about nine thousand.[168] The military campaigns led to a thirty-five percent reduction in attacks against infrastructure.[169] Nationwide murders fell from a high of thirty thousand in 2002 to around sixteen thousand in 2008.[170] In the same period, kidnappings in Colombia declined by eighty-three percent and terrorist attacks by seventy-six percent.[171] It was also during Uribe's administration that the military pulled off one of its biggest coups against the group, the 2008 assassination of Raúl Reyes, who had been hiding out in a sanctuary in Ecuador. The special forces, disguised as humanitarian workers, also embarrassed FARC by freeing the group's highest profile hostages, including former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt.[172]

It is also apparent that the government's security efforts made it less attractive to be a FARC insurgent hiding out in the jungle. Uribe implemented programs in tandem with the military strategy that aimed to create incentives for individual guerrillas to voluntarily demobilize, such as the legal protections offered to demobilized guerrillas under the Justice and Peace Law. The programs produced significant results. In 2007, for the first time in the history of the conflict, more FARC guerrillas deserted than were killed in combat. By the following year, 14,781 guerrillas voluntarily demobilized.[173] Hunger drove many insurgents to flee, under threat of death, and surrender to the military. Moreover, many of those who voluntarily demobilized had been in FARC for ten to fifteen years, signaling that even the "diehard revolutionaries" were losing heart. Security forces made judicious use of these deserters, reinserting them back into FARC ranks without guerrilla commanders noticing they had gone missing. The guerrillas-cum-informants provided the military with crucial on-the-ground intelligence.[174] Drug trafficking, the financial mainstay of the insurgents, experienced significant

setbacks as well. Security officials seized 153 tons of cocaine, eradicated 223,000 hectares of illicit plantations, and destroyed two thousand coca-processing laboratories.[175] Reportedly, FARC's annual drug revenues decreased from $500 million to about $250 million.

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[148] International Crisis Group, *Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy*, 4, fn.21.

[149] Ibid., 5.

[150] As quoted in John T. Fishel, "The Interagency Arena at the Operational Level: The Cases of Known Stability Operations" in ed. Gabriella Marcella, *Affairs of State: The Interagency and National Security* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, December 2008), http://ccai-colombia.org/files/primarydocs/InteragencyArenaAtTheOperationalLevel.pdf, 435.

[151] Ibid.

[152] As quoted in Adam Isaacson and Abigail Poe, *After Plan Colombia: Evaluating 'Integrated Action,' the Next Phase of U.S. Assistance,"* International Policy Report, December 2009, http://www.ciponline.org/research/entry/after-plan-colombia, 6.

[153] Ibid., 6–7.

[154] Ibid., 9.

[155] Ibid., 8–9.

[156] Ibid., 8.

[157] Ibid., 12.

[158] Ibid., 12–17.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid., 23–25.

[161] Arturo J. Carrillo, "Truth, Justice, and Reparation in Colombia," in *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War*, ed. Virginia Marie Bouvier (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), 134.

[162] June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*. Congressional Research Service RL32250 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 28, 2012), 22–23.

[163] Ibid.

[164] June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, 22–23.

[165] Hudson, *Colombia: A Country Study*, 348.

[166] Metelits, *Inside Insurgency: Violence, Civilians, and Revolutionary Group Behavior on the Front Lines with the FARC, SPLA, and PKK*, 106.

[167] Hudson, *Colombia: A Country Study*, 349–350.

[168] Martin, "Colombia's New Counterinsurgency Plan."

[169] Hudson, *Colombia: A Country Study*, 347.

[170] Martin, "Colombia's New Counterinsurgency Plan."

[171] Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.

[172] Crandall, "Colombia's Catastrophic Success."

[173] Hudson, *Colombia: A Country Study*, 349–350.

[174] Crandall, "Colombia's Catastrophic Success."

[175] Hudson, *Colombia: A Country Study*, 347.

CONCLUSION TO PART III

In many regards, Uribe's countermeasures brought the Colombian government full circle. The early efforts of Plan Lazo sought to address the socioeconomic conditions underpinning the grievances and legitimacy of violent challengers to the Colombian government. However, in this early period, the Colombian government failed to complement military strategies with widespread reforms that sought to fundamentally restructure institutional inequality and government abuse. For many years the restrictions on political participation under the National Front formed a key part of insurgents' narratives to mobilize Colombians to take armed action against the government. The constitutional reforms of 1990, prompted by the M-19 guerrillas, detracted from the validity of these arguments. Yet, inequality and government abuses continue to lend some credence to societal grievances. Under Plan Colombia, Plan Patriot, and later Integrated Action, the government reduced the operational capacity of armed challengers. In part, this achievement is due to the development of credible partnerships among key stakeholders in the struggle against political violence in Colombia. It is less clear, however, if the government has made strides on other conditions contributing to violence, such as weak state presence, lack of trust for civilian institutions, and poor human development.

One failure of the Colombian government's responses to armed challengers has been its inability to isolate extremist elements from the moderate citizenry. It is unlikely that any countermeasures can expect to win the "hearts and minds" while simultaneously carrying out illegal executions, torture, and widespread arrests. Professionalization of security forces responsible for carrying out countermeasures is an important part of any plan. As the example of Colombia illustrates, it is also a painstakingly slow process at times. Reforming institutional culture should form part of those efforts, but also a reform of any institutional incentives aggravating unacceptable behavior. An emphasis on guerrilla body counts encouraged gross abuses against the civilian population in the "false positives" murders perpetrated by soldiers seeking promotion.[a] Even when the Uribe Administration pursued a measure of judiciary reform through the Fusion Centers, its efforts harmed community support. Judicial and prosecutorial authorities arrived in former guerilla strongholds, a positive step in consolidating civilian institutions there. Upon arrival, the authorities heavily focused on suspected guerrillas and supporters. In a region of the FARC's former despeje, many within the local community had some connection

[a] For a thorough discussion of the false positives scandal, please see *Chapter 11. Conclusion*.

with the guerrillas. As a result, authorities initiated mass arrests of local townspeople. Many would scatter when any government official entered the area.[1] Human rights groups and others in the international community continue to pressure the country to curb its human rights abuses.

Effective countermeasures also require good partnerships. Too often, governments and states are characterized as singular entities. But, governments are comprised of many different individuals, agencies, and alliances, sometimes acting on behalf of their own interests. In some periods, the civilian institutions and the military in Colombia appeared to be working at odds rather than united under a concerted strategy. The executive administration's decision to negotiate with insurgent groups at different junctures was not always supported by the military. On occasion, this difference of opinion led to collusion between military and paramilitary forces that further deteriorated the security environment. The military also acted as a spoiler in the peace process, launching attacks against insurgents that derailed negotiations.

In part, Uribe's effectiveness was his ability to unite disparate elements of the national government in a singular vision for a secure Colombia. His election signaled the onset of another crucial partnership missing from government efforts—the population. In this case, especially the support of the upper strata of Colombian society that had been shielded from much of the violence. This was also the case during La Violencia, the country's mid-twentieth century war, when most of the Colombian elite were ensconced in urban centers far from the intense violence in the countryside. In the early twenty-first century, privileged Colombians began to feel the pinch of leftist violence. Leftist insurgents effectively imprisoned them in cities where they remained fearful of extortion kidnappings. The FARC also began to increase its urban operations, setting off bombs in major urban centers. Uribe's election platform emphasized a military, not a political, solution to the endemic insecurity problems in the country. With their vote, elite Colombians granted Uribe a broad mandate, and funding through a war tax, to execute his strategic vision. In 2006, the country re-elected Uribe to continue his efforts.

Of course, the Colombian government also received a great deal of support from the United States in Plan Colombia. By 2009, the Colombian government had received around $8 billion in support for first counternarcotic efforts then counterinsurgent efforts. Domestic politics, not an analysis of Colombia's operating environment, drove these decisions. The external support provided by the United States represented a double-edged sword for the Colombian government. While the funds and training generally benefitted the military, it also came

with heavy pressures to adjust strategies to accommodate U.S. political interests. These pressures contributed to the strategic rift between the civilian government and the military under Pastrana. While Pastrana's administration pursued negotiations and counternarcotic operations, the military's analysis led them to the conclusion that the key destabilizer was the insurgency, not the drug trafficking tactics FARC used to fund its operation. It is arguably not the sheer volume of U.S. dollars provided under Plan Colombia that helped the country gain ground against the FARC. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what made the difference. But, it is clear that along the way Colombians became capable actors in their own right. External assistance means little in the absence of willing and able counterparts.[2]

Colombia's countermeasures against illegal armed violence also demonstrate the difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of counterinsurgent campaigns. Most often, the measures of effectiveness used to benchmark the success of Colombia's countermeasures are statistics of insurgent numbers, insurgent attacks, and homicide and kidnapping rates. Those statistics, included in the preceding section, do provide insight into the security situation in Colombia. Drops in homicides, kidnappings, and the number of insurgents certainly point to FARC's decreased operational capacity.

Yet, many of the efforts, such as the CCAI and Fusion Centers, address more intangible conditions that also contribute to continued violence in the country. These efforts, and others, have aimed to consolidate civilian government institutions in areas formerly dominated by guerrillas and paramilitaries; rebuild trust between communities and the government; and augment human development of Colombians in lesser developed regions of the country. Statistics on homicide and kidnapping commonly repeated by the media, military, and politicians cannot capture achievements, or lack thereof, on the more qualitative conditions underlying ongoing insurgencies and conflict.

The FARC has made good use of the intangibility of success in counterinsurgent campaigns. The group altered its tactics from countering conventional forces to targeting the political will of the government and population to continue on its course. In part, FARC's course of action resulted from the paucity of its supporters. Rather than relying on a mass base to confront the government, it identified a "shortcut" in the form of political will. According to one analyst, the perception of the FARC threat far outpaced the group's actual strategic threat during Uribe's campaign: "It could be argued that this is the very stuff of insurgency, where every action is intended to have a political consequence." The media, alongside Uribe's political enemies, probably

contributed as much to the perception of threat of FARC as the insurgents themselves.[3]

Yet, it is difficult to ascertain what a return to "normalcy" can look like in a country riddled with violence for the past seventy years. Despite curtailing violence perpetrated by leftist insurgents and paramilitaries, rampant criminality remains a problem in the country. Officials have noted an increase in emerging bandes criminales (BACRIM or bacrim), or criminal bands involved in drug trafficking and criminal extortion. Some routinely collaborate with FARC and ELN. Demobilized paramilitary members, and less often leftist insurgents from FARC or ELN, frequently transition to criminal activity in these groups.

Colombia has many advantages that other war torn countries lack. The World Bank ranks Colombia as an "upper middle income" country. As of 2009, its literacy rate among the adult population ranked in the ninetieth percentile. A majority of Colombians, even in the countryside, have access to potable water, electricity, and education. Despite these ample resources, Colombia continues to have one of the highest rates of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the world. The daunting challenge facing lesser developed countries with intractable conflict is apparent in comparison to Colombia. In many of these countries, such as Somalia, the international community has few, if any, credible partners with which to engage. Many programs, designed to augment economic and human development, are hampered by populations with generations of individuals who have experienced interrupted education and workforce training. And, perhaps most importantly, have no experience of effective governance administered by their state.

ENDNOTES

1 As quoted in Adam Isaacson and Abigail Poe, *After Plan Colombia: Evaluating 'Integrated Action,' the Next Phase of U.S. Assistance,"* International Policy Report, December 2009, http://www.ciponline.org/research/entry/after-plan-colombia, 17.

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CHAPTER 11.

CONCLUSION

The internal armed conflict in Colombia, which began when Nikita Khrushchev still ruled the Soviet Union, remains stubbornly resistant to a lasting resolution. Many of the underlying conditions that formed the bedrock of insurgent grievances against the Colombian state have not been effectively addressed. However, in the early 1990s, several insurgent groups did successfully demobilize and integrate into the legal, public sphere.

A recent study of the socioeconomic conditions in Colombia indicates that, despite gains, many Colombians still suffer under poor living conditions. Statistics released by the government show a sharp drop in absolute poverty[a] among Colombians, down from forty-nine percent in 2002 to thirty-four percent in 2011. Likewise, extreme poverty decreased from eighteen percent to eleven percent in the same period. While these decreasing measures of poverty point to progress, acute disparity remains between rural and urban populations. Colombians in rural areas are twice as likely to be mired in poverty as their urban counterparts. Another more comprehensive indicator used by Colombian authorities to measure poverty also shows gains. This multidimensional indicator includes measures of education, employment, housing, and infrastructure variables, among others. According to this indicator, the number of poor Colombians decreased by half, from sixty percent in 1997 to twenty-nine percent in 2011. Like the basic income poverty measure above, the multidimensional indicator shows a disparity between urban and rural populations. Rural Colombians are more likely to be poor than those in urban areas because of a lack of critical infrastructure, particularly for water and sewage; low educational achievement; and low levels of formal employment.[2]

Moreover, as discussed in *Chapter 10. Government Countermeasures*, the ongoing violence has contributed to the cycle of poverty in the country. The violence disproportionately affects those in rural areas. To finance their operations, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), and paramilitary groups forcibly expropriate resources from civilian populations in their areas of operation. These methods have significantly deincentivized civilian investment, trapping many rural households into a cycle of "low productivity activities and poverty." Furthermore, the violence has forced millions of Colombians, many of them poor peasants, to relocate to areas less affected by the violence. Often, these

[a] There are many ways to measure poverty. Recently, Colombia adopted a refined methodology to define what constitutes poverty in the country. In this case, the government defines poverty as individuals or families unable to afford basic services and a basket of basic foods. Extreme poverty is defined as those unable to afford sufficient food to meet minimal caloric intake needs.[1]

refugees leave behind their income and land. The overall loss is estimated to be three percent of Colombia's total gross domestic product (GDP). Once the refugees relocate, usually to urban areas, many do not have the necessary skills and qualifications to find gainful employment in their new environments. As a result, most refugees live in conditions of extreme poverty.[3]

Recently, the Colombian government enacted one of its first policies intended to address the issue of victims' reparations. In June 2011, President Santos signed into law the Victims and Land Restitution Law, or Ley de Víctimas Restitución de Tierras. The law is intended to facilitate the return of land to the civilians from whom it was illegally seized by numerous armed actors. The paramilitary groups, formerly united under the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) umbrella before that group's demobilization in 2006, were the most egregious perpetrators of land seizures, sometimes working in collusion with state security forces. In addition, civilians abandoned a great deal of the land after being forcibly displaced by leftist guerillas. Under the law, millions of hectares of land are slated to be returned to their lawful owners. However well intentioned the law, it is not without its detractors. Critics, including the United Nations High Commissioner, are concerned that the law could be used to deny many victims effective reparation, as well as to legalize occupation by questionable tenants and the profits accrued from those illegally seized assets.[4] The law has also provoked violent opposition by armed groups calling themselves "anti-restitution armies" in some regions. In September 2012, the Constitutional Court declared some portions of the law unconstitutional, including provisions that excluded many victims of paramilitary violence from land restitution.[5]

Throughout the five decades of internal conflict, Colombian authorities have perpetrated human rights violations. In response to domestic and international opposition to their questionable policies, the government has taken measures to address these systemic violations. One of the most notorious of these violations included the so-called "false positives" scandal. The scandal involved extrajudicial killings of civilians by security forces that presented the innocent victims as guerrillas to inflate body counts. During his presidency, Uribe adamantly denied the army's involvement in the practice. However, in late 2008, investigators from the prosecutor general's office uncovered damning evidence that security officers were involved in such incidents. After its investigations, the office identified 2,997 civilian victims of the practice. As many as one in five of the guerillas deaths reported by security forces in 2007 was in fact an executed civilian. The office found that the perpetrators first killed civilians then dressed their corpses as guerrillas, presenting

them as "combat kills" to increase their chances for promotion.[6] As of August 2012, of the 1,700 cases of extrajudicial killings by state agents under investigation, less than ten percent resulted in convictions. As part of those convictions, 539 army members, including two colonels and two lieutenant colonels, were convicted.[7] Furthermore, despite promises from Uribe that the cases would be tried in civilian courts, in mid-2013 the Colombian legislature was debating a bill that would move the false-positive cases to the military court justice system. Opponents of the law argue that it will protect the military from prosecution of human rights violations. The current Santos administration countered that the law is necessary to address the legal insecurity facing the military, fearing that security forces will face prosecution for lawful combatant killings.[8] While the Colombian government has sought to improve its human rights record in recent years, many perpetrators continue to act with impunity.[9]

As the above discussion demonstrates, the objectives of leftist insurgent groups the FARC and the ELN remain largely unfulfilled. Through force of arms, the insurgents sought to address issues related to social inequality, the concentration of power in the hands of a small elite, and the installation of a socialist regime. Yet, for millions of Colombians, the ongoing conflict has only increased the fragility of human security and justice in the country.

However, Colombia's current political system does differ from the system that governed the country when the insurgents first took up arms. Of the seven insurgent groups that emerged in the wake of La Violencia, five of those groups[b] demobilized in the early 1990s, representing around 5,000 combatants. The transition of the most notable of these groups, Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), is discussed in detail in the *Public Component* and *Political Operations* sections of *Chapter 8. Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19).* Their efforts were vital in securing democratic and human rights reforms in a new constitution ratified in 1991. In this regard, M-19, alone among the insurgencies discussed in this study, accomplished the goals for which it fought.

All of the public components established by the demobilized groups, including the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD-M19), were defeated in open political competition in the years after the demobilization agreements. Despite their failure to create a viable political movement, many of the former guerrillas successfully reintegrated into political and public life, "[participating] in policy-making and public debate through think tanks, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], journalism and

[b] In addition to M-19, the Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame (MAQL), the Ejército Popular de Liberacíon (EPL), the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), and the Corriente de Renovacíon Socalista (CRS) successfully demobilized during this time.

jobs in the public sector."[10] The former guerrillas' participation in these sectors has "contributed to [strengthening] the liberal political ideas and human rights norms in Colombia."[11] Several former guerrilla leaders are now influential members of the Polo Democrático (PD), a left-wing party founded in 2003 that enjoys popular support. Others have participated in politics at both the national and the local levels.[12]

Currently, amidst ongoing conflict, the Colombian government is facing the challenge of reintegrating nearly 48,000 former guerrillas into civilian life. Around 31,671 armed combatants demobilized as part of the government's agreement with the AUC in 2003 and 2006. Since 2002, an additional 15,800 combatants from the FARC, ELN, and AUC demobilized voluntarily. The barriers to reintegrating these combatants are much more significant than those experienced by the demobilized groups in the 1990s.[c] The groups' human rights records, especially in the case of the AUC, have prompted both domestic and international outcry over their reintegration, even leading to outright social rejection in some cases. By contrast, the demobilized groups of the 1990s laid down their weapons before succumbing to the "degradations of war" that dog today's insurgents—civilian massacres, drug trafficking, and extensive kidnappings.[14]

CURRENT FARC NEGOTIATIONS

At the time of writing, the Colombian government, under President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (elected in 2010), is negotiating a peace agreement with the FARC in Havana, Cuba.[d] Santos issued a statement announcing the talks in September 2012. The talks officially began in Havana the next month.[15] There is great support for the talks among Colombians, with seventy-seven percent of the population in support.[16,e] In a departure from previous peace talks, the FARC entered the negotiations at a distinct military disadvantage, in part due to the military countermeasures orchestrated by Santos's predecessor, Uribe, under the US-funded Plan Colombia.[17] The peace talks proceeded amidst ongoing conflict between the two parties. Despite repeated FARC requests

[c] One researcher identifies four critical factors that either facilitate or bar the reintegration of armed groups: "the international and domestic political and normative contexts; the nature and behavior of the illegal armed group . . .; the terms of the peace negotiations; and the practical dimensions of exercising political interlocution."[13]

[d] Representatives from Norway are also mediating the negotiations.

[e] However, Colombians' support for the talks fluctuated throughout the initial stages of the talks.

for a cease-fire,[f] Santos is adamant that a cease-fire will be forthcoming only after a comprehensive peace agreement is reached.[18] The six-point agenda agreed upon by both parties includes land reform, political participation, disarmament, solutions to the problems associated with illicit drugs, rights of the victims, and peace deal implementation.[19]

Initial negotiations addressed the issue of land reform and rural development. In accordance with an agreement reached by both sides, the United Nations Development Program and Colombia's National University hosted a forum in Bogotá that sought input on the issue from civil society. More than thirteen hundred individuals representing four hundred organizations participated in the event, producing 546 proposals for consideration in the negotiations.[20] The final accord on land reform, reached in May 2013, called for fair access to land and rural development programs to benefit rural poor. The accord also includes stipulations for a "land bank" as a way to reallocate land illegally seized during the course of the five-decade-long conflict. The FARC contends that most of that land was seized by far-right paramilitary groups on behalf of cattle ranchers and drug traffickers. While the government does not deny those claims, it has argued that the FARC itself is responsible for up to a third of all illegal land seizures. Nevertheless, the land reform accord, the first ever such accord reached during the conflict, signals an important milestone in efforts to reach a peace settlement.[21] Most of the content of the land reform accord remains under close wraps as both sides continue to negotiate.

After reaching an accord on land reform, the FARC and government negotiators began discussing the second item on the agenda, the thorny issue of political participation. At the outset of this round of talks, the FARC issued a "ten minimal proposals" list that includes deep structural reforms to the Colombian political system. Included on that list, for instance, is the abolishment of presidentialism, the abolishment of the House of Representatives, and the establishment of a new branch of government called "Popular Power." In addition, the FARC has demanded a constitutional convention to rewrite the existing Colombian constitution, ostensibly similar to the mechanism granted to the smaller, weaker M-19 in the 1990s. The government, in turn, initially refused to entertain this possibility. It remains unclear what the FARC hopes to gain through such an assembly, as it is a "risky move." Unlike its M-19 counterparts in the 1990s, the FARC is very unpopular in dense urban regions and would likely receive few elected seats in the assembly, giving the group little leverage over the process. By contrast, M-19 enjoyed significant elected representation in the Constituent

[f] The FARC voluntarily initiated a two-month unilateral cease-fire that ended in late January 2013.

Assembly in 1991. In response, the government has offered the FARC the opportunity to present the eventual peace agreement in a popular referendum that would sanctify the agreement into law. After some back-and-forth disagreement in the media over the issue, the government has indicated that it retains some flexibility on the matter of a constitutional convention.[22]

ENDNOTES

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 8.

4 Amnesty International, "Colombia: The Victims and Land Restitution Law," *Amnesty International Publications*, April 2012, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/018/2012/en, 5.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. ELN MANIFESTOS

Camilo Torres Manifesto

This manifesto is Torres's public resignation from the church and a distillation of the speeches and letters he had been writing throughout 1964–1965. The manifesto was published in newspapers throughout Colombia in June 1965.[1]

> When circumstances exist which make it impossible for people to give themselves to Christ, a priest is called upon in a special way to make war on those circumstances, even if this leads him to forfeit the celebration of the Eucharist; for the Eucharist, if it is not accompanied by the self-giving of Christians, is a ritual devoid of meaning. In the present structures of the Church it has become impossible for me to continue exercising my priesthood as far as external worship is concerned. However, the Christian priesthood does not consist only in the celebration of external rites. The Mass, chief goal of all priestly activity, is fundamentally a community action. Now the Christian community cannot offer the sacrifice of the Mass with authenticity if that same community has not been practicing beforehand, and in an effective way, the love of neighbor which the gospel talks about.
>
> I chose Christianity because I believed it to be the purest way of serving my neighbor. I was chosen by Christ to be a priest for all eternity, and I was urged on by the desire to dedicate myself twenty-four hours a day to the love of my fellow-man. As a sociologist I have tried to make that love genuinely efficacious by means of scientific research and technical advances. Analyzing Colombian society I have come to realize that the country needs a revolution in order to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and provide well-being for the majority of our people. I believe that the revolutionary struggle is a Christian struggle, and a priestly one. Indeed, in the present specific conditions of Colombia, participation in that struggle is the only way men can show love for their neighbors as they should.
>
> Ever since I became a priest I have tried in a hundred different ways to encourage laymen, whether Catholic or

> not, to join the revolutionary struggle. However, as these laymen's actions have drawn forth no response from the masses, I have resolved to dedicate myself to the cause, thus fulfilling part of my priestly mission of leading men to the love of God by the sure path of love of neighbor. As a Colombian I consider this activity to be of the very essence of my Christian life and of my priesthood.
>
> As things stand at present in the Church mine is a mission at odds with the hierarchy's will. I do not wish to disobey that will, nor do I wish to be untrue to my own conscience. For that reason I have asked His Eminence, the cardinal, to relieve me of my clerical obligations in order to serve the people in the temporal sphere. I am giving up one of the privileges I hold most dear (the celebration of the Church's ritual) in order to create conditions which will give to that ritual a more authentic meaning.
>
> If I make this sacrifice I do so in the belief that my commitment to my fellow-countrymen obliges me to it. The ultimate criterion on human decisions is love, supernatural love; I am prepared to run all the risks that that love may ask of me.

ELN Simacota Manifesto

This manifesto was published after first ELN incident, January 7, 1965.[2]

> The reactionary violence unleashed by a succession of oligarchic governments and continued under the corrupt regime of Valencia, Ruiz Novoa and Lleras, has been a powerful weapon used to squash the revolutionary peasant movement, a powerful weapon of domination for the last fifteen years.
>
> Education is in the hands of traders who grow rich on the ignorance in which they maintain our people.
>
> The soil is tilled by peasants who own nothing and who waste away their strength and their families' health for the benefit of oligarchs who live like kings in the cities.
>
> The workers receive starvation wages and are subjected to the misery and humiliations of big industry, both foreign and national.

Democratic young intellectuals and professionals are obliged to place their talents at the service of the dominating class, or perish.

Small and medium-sized producers, both in the country and in the city, are ruined by ruthless competition and credit monopoly in the hands of foreign capital and its local flunkies.

The riches of the Colombian people are looted by American imperialists.

But the people, who have felt the scourge of exploitation, of misery, or reactionary violence, have risen up and are ready to fight. The revolutionary struggle is the only path open to the people in order to overthrow the present regime of violence and deceit.

We form the Army of National Liberation and fight for the freedom of Colombia.

The people, whether they be Liberals or Conservatives, will make common cause with us to overthrow the oligarchy of both parties.

LONG LIVE THE UNION OF PEASANTS, WORKERS, STUDENTS, PROFESSIONALS AND ALL HONEST MEN WHO WANT TO MAKE OF COLOMBIA A LAND WORTHY OF THE COLOMBIANS!

LIBERATION OF DEATH!

ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

José Antonio Galan Front

[signed by assumed names of Vásquez and Medina]

Carlos Villarreal

Andres Sierra

ENDNOTES

1 Walter J. Broderick, *Camilo Torres: A Biography of the Priest Guerrillero* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 253–254.

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APPENDIX B. M-19: THE GUERRILLA POSITION PAPER AND OUR REVISION

1. We of the Guerrilla Column Jorge Marcos Zambrano, members of the politico-military organization M-19 believe that in these long talks, we have tried to focus on the issues under discussion while you have tried to digress and delay. Consequently, a common interest in achieving a rapid solution does not exist. We have had thirty-five days without any clear solutions being presented by the Government.
2. We believe that there is no need to express doubt because we have none. The Government, during the length of the negotiations has not been telling the truth as the following examples will show:
   A. At the beginning of the negotiations, when we asked for the release of Comrade Cuenca Cortes Montegranario, the response was that we were asking for the release of a delinquent condemned to eighteen years in prison for murder. This was done with the intent of impressing the Ambassadors since Comrade Montegranario has already served most of his sentence and should regain his freedom at the end of the year.
   B. A similar thing happened when we asked for the release of Comrade Coqueco Marco Aurelio.
   C. The Government has issued press bulletins which it has had to retract at the request of the Ambassadors.
3. Since our beginnings as an organization, we have behaved correctly with the people, to power with arms! Our organization has kept its promises. During the operation "Democracy and Liberty," Commander One has kept his promises and this can be verified by His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio, the Ambassadors, the Consuls, and the rest of the hostages.
4. You have produced frustrations that have demoralized the hostages, because on the telephone you speak of concrete answers and at the negotiations you equivocate.
5. We are aware of the release of Mrs. Fals, of Mrs. Torrado and of the ex-magistrate Tony López Ozuela. This give us great satisfaction because their release would not have been possible without our action and because it serves to show the injustices and arbitrariness of Military Justice, which finds itself obliged to release innocent persons after more than fourteen months

of torture and prison. Meditate upon the words spoken by Mrs. Fals on television concerning Military Justice.

6. With regard to the previous meeting at which our departure with the 311 political prisoners was discussed, we believe that there is "no one blinder than he who will not see." There is nothing on the record about our travelling with persons absolved by the courts martial.
7. If no one has been detained for belonging to the M-19, how do you explain to the people that your principal objective is to destroy our organization; the eager search for our leaders who are free; that prisoners are obliged by torture to confess that they are members of the M-19; that there are hundreds of our comrades under sentence for having distributed our propaganda. Why do you offer rewards to those who turn over our comrades? As you must know, the law states that a person is innocent until proven guilty; however, in Colombia unfortunately the "law of the jungle" prevails. It is considered preferable to condemn the innocent than to absolve the guilty. Proof of this are the hundreds of thousands of prisoners in our country who have not had their juridical situation defined.
8. If, as you say, our country is democratic and free and military judges are just and honest, lift the state of siege so that the biased courts-martial will be replaced by ordinary justice and so that civilians in Colombia might be judged by civilian judges and not the current situation where the military accuse, torture, defend, prosecute and pass judgment, which is a function reserved to God. In other words, we do not accept the trials in progress against our revolutionary and popular fighting comrades because they should not be judged by murderous torturers. The solution does not lie in shortening the processes in order to end them sooner. It is not a race with the clock. We are not desperate. The problem is that the military cannot judge civilians in courts-martial. The problem is that we have some diplomatic hostages who we are prepared to release for the popular fighters you maliciously call "delinquents" just as, in their time, Bolívar, San Martin and many other heroes were called.
9. Up until this moment we have released twenty-nine hostages without expecting any gift from the Government. We have done this, not because of "pressure," but for humanitarian reasons and to show by example that we wish a dialogue and a peaceful solution.

10. It is very significant that political prisoners in Colombia be acknowledged to be judged unjustly and not be treated in full dignity as human beings.
11. We agree that it is those prisoners who remain behind and those imprisoned in the future that require our greatest attention and it is through our operation "Democracy and Liberty" that we have shown that political prisoners exist in Colombia and that they are savagely tortured and abandoned to their fate because military justice does not offer any guarantees.
12. You say you have no interest in prolonging the present situation indefinitely but, in practice, you are demonstrating the contrary to us and to the hostages. We believe that the Government has within its means the possibility of a decorous and legal solution, and we have demonstrated this in the document presented to the Government delegates for the President of the Republic.
13. With regard to the persons interested in the ransom negotiations, we wish first the freedom of our comrades and then the money. We do not want to "mount the saddle before we have the horse."
14. On invitations to international organizations, we wish to inform that we accept the International Red Cross, the Human Rights Commission of the OAS, and Amnesty International as assistance to get you out of the muddle you find yourselves in and so that they may make clear that the international concept of human right does take precedence over national rights.
15. We propose that your documents and ours be made public, so that public opinion might be the judge of our actions.

Hostage Version

We of the Guerrilla Column Jorge Marcos Zambrano, members of the politico-military organization M-19, have made a detailed study of the document that was delivered to us by the Government delegates on April 1st and, before entering into specifics, wish to indicate our desire to avoid the polemic tone evident in your document since we consider that this could obstruct or delay the negotiations. The Command

accepts that, since the taking of the Dominican Embassy, it achieved the following gains:

1. Initiation and continuation of the negotiations.
2. Withdrawal of the troops and the Government's promise of not attempting to take the Embassy by force unless there was an attempt against the lives of the hostages.
3. Publication of our communique and national and international publicity demonstrating that in Colombia there are tortures and political prisoners.
4. Measures taken by the Government to accelerate the trials by creating a Commission of Jurists for this purpose.
5. From the beginning of the negotiations, the Government has offered to invite international institutions to observe the courts-martial and accelerate investigations concerning abuse of authority, torture and murder of persons linked with revolutionary organizations, syndicates and labor unions; a promise which was complied with only a few days ago as we learned from radio and television. In addition, in our view, the positive points of the Government's document are as follows:
   A. The Government's Indication that it is those comrades in prison and those that will be imprisoned in the future that require the greatest protection; therefore, we reiterate as one of our accomplishments in operation "Democracy and Liberty" that our comrades will not be abandoned to the military but that their trials will be under the surveillance of international organizations.
   B. Similarly, we accept that said organizations will be permitted to investigate charges of abuse of authority and torture committed against political prisoners.
   C. We share the Government's desire for maintaining the dialogue, but we make clear that dialogue for the sake of dialoguing is fruitless. The negotiations must be directed toward a decorous and peaceful solution.
   D. The expressed hope on the part of the Government that those prisoners in which we are interested could be exonerated by the courts and be able to travel with us. Finally we wish to be very clear about the following points which are proposals pending from the beginning of the negotiation:

1. From the beginning we have indicated that we have a negotiable list of 311 comrades; what is not negotiable or subject to debate are those on the list who are members of our High Command.
2. Our demand for money is equally negotiable in proportion to the number of released comrades. We accept that progress could be made in this aspect without this signifying any compromise on our part.
3. If, as you say, our country is democratic and free, permit justice to be served and the state of siege to be lifted so as to end the biased courts-martial and that civilians might be judged by civilian judges and not as in the present situation where the military, accuse, torture, defend, prosecute and pass judgment.
4. We propose that your document and ours be made known to the public so that public opinion might judge our actions.

Bogotá

April 1, 1980

By the High Command

Commander One.

Reprinted with permission from Diego Asencio and Nancy Asencio, *Diplomats and Terrorists—Or: How I Survived a 61-Day Cocktail Party*, ed. Manuel Asencio (San Francisco: Manuel Asencio Publishing, 2011).

APPENDIX C. ACRONYMS

ACCU	Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá
ACDEGAM	Asociación Campesina de Ganaderos y Agricultores del Magdalena Medio
ACI	Andean Counterdrug Initiative
AD M-19	Alianza Democrática M-19
ANAPO	Alianza Nacional Popular
ARIS	Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia
BCG	*Batallones Contraguerrillas*
BRIM	*Brigades Movile*
CCAI	Coordination Center for Integrated Action
CGSB	Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNG	Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera
COCE	Central Command
CODHES	Consultaría par los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento
COLAR	Colombian Army, the Ejerctio Nacional
CONVIVIR	Servicios Especiales de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada
CRS	Corriente de Renovacíon Socalista
CTC	Confederation of Workers of Colombia
DDR	Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DSP	Democratic Security and Defense Policy
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
EMC	Estado Mayor Central
EPL	El Ejército Popular de Liberación
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEDECAFE	Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia/ National Federation of Coffee Growers
FN	Frente Nacional
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialization

JAC	Juntas Accion Communal
JUCO	Juventudes Comunista
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril
MAQL	Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame
MAS	Muerte a Secuestradores
MIR	Movimiento de Integración Revolucionaria
MLN	Movimiento de Liberación Nacional
MMT	Mobile Training Team
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PCC	Partido Comunista Colombiano
PCCC	Colombian Clandestine Communist Party
PD	Polo Democrático
PEPES	People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia
PSR	Partido Socialista Revolucionario/Revolutionary Socialist Party
SORO	Special Operations Research Office
SOUTHCOM	US Southern Command
UC-ELN	National Liberation Army–Camilist Union
UNIR	Unión Nacional Izquierdistat Revolucionaria
UP	Unión Patriótica/Patriotic Union Party
USAID	US Agency for International Development

APPENDIX D. TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Methodology of the Study

All ARIS Tier 1 Insurgency Case Studies are presented using the same framework. While not a strict template, it is a method used by the team to ensure a common treatment of the cases, which will aid readers in comparing one case with another.

All of the sources used in preparation of these case studies are unclassified and for the most part are secondary rather than primary sources. Where we could, we used primary sources to describe the objectives of the revolution and to give a sense of the perspective of the revolutionary or another participant or observer. This limitation to unclassified sources allows a much wider distribution of the case studies while hindering the inclusion of revealing or perhaps more accurate information. We selected sources that provide the most reliable and accurate research we could obtain, endeavoring to use sources we believe to be authoritative and unbiased.

These case studies are intended to be strictly neutral in terms of bias toward the revolution or those to whom the revolution was or is directed. We sought to balance any interpretive bias in our sources and in the presentation of information so that the case may be studied without any indication by the author of moral, ethical, or other judgment.

While we used a multi-methodological approach in our analysis, the analytical method that underpins these case studies can most accurately be described as "contextual social/political analysis." Research in the social sciences is often done from one of two opposing perspectives. The first is a positivist perspective, which looks for universal laws to describe actions in the human domain and considers context to be background noise. The second is a postmodernist or constructivist perspective, which denies the existence of general laws and attributes of social and political structures and processes, and as a consequence focuses almost entirely on local factors. Contextual analysis is "something in between," in which context is used to facilitate the discovery of regularities in social and political processes and thereby promote systematic knowledge.[1] In practice, contextual social/political analysis balances these two perspectives, combining a comparative understanding of the actors, events, activities, relationships, and interactions associated with the case of interest with an appreciation for the significant role context played in how and why things transpired.

"Context" includes factors, settings, or circumstances that in some way may act on or interact with actors, organizations, or other entities within the country being studied, often enabling or constraining

actions. It is a construct or interpretation of the properties of a system, organization, or situation that are necessary to provide meaning beyond what is objectively observable.[2]

Although we have applied this methodology throughout these case studies, the section entitled *Context and Catalysts of the Insurgency* focuses heavily on contextual aspects. Examples of elements of context often used in this type of analysis include culture, history, place (location), population (demography), and technology. Within these studies, we present the primary discussion of context as follows:

Physical Environment

Social scientists often cite features of the physical environment as a risk factor for conflict—whether it is slope elevation, mountainous terrain, or rural countryside. Rough terrain[a] is a typical topographical feature correlated with rebel activity, as it provides safe havens and resources for insurgents. Insurgent groups such as the Afghan Taliban have benefited from mountainous terrain, making pursuit and surveillance by countervailing forces difficult. Likewise, the Viet Cong in Vietnam benefited from dense forest cover despite American attempts at defoliation.[3] Less clear are the reasons behind the correlation that researchers have found between rough terrain and conflict. Most theories for this relationship center on insurgent viability and a state's capacity to govern. In short, rough terrain is correlated with conflict, but that does not mean it causes conflict or that rough terrain is necessary for a conflict to emerge.[b]

Other geographic features, such as location and distance, have an impact on conflict patterns and processes. Generally, regions farther from the capital are at higher risk for conflict, as are those closer to international borders. Another important consideration when analyzing the impact of geography on conflict patterns and processes is the expanse of the conflict. While it is common to speak of entire countries embroiled in conflict, actual conflicts generally occur only in a small percentage of a state's territory, typically fifteen percent. Despite that

[a] Most researchers use mountains (or slope elevation) and forests as a proxy for "rough terrain." Little attention has been paid to other topographical features, such as swamps, that impede government access or surveillance.

[b] The relationship between terrain and conflict can be described as follows: "rebels who seek refuge in the mountains are better able to withstand a militarily superior opposition . . . that rebel groups will take advantage of such terrain, whenever available. We do not believe that terrain in and of itself is a cause of conflict, nor does the rough terrain proposition anticipate such a relationship."[4]

low figure, however, internal conflicts can sometimes encompass nearly half of the territory of the host country.[5]

Historical Context

Revolutions or insurgencies do not emerge from formless ether but, rather, take their shape from accumulated layers of historical experience. Not only are actors in insurgent movements important participants in history, but they are also its end users. That is, insurgent movements are not only shaped by historical experience, but they also actively seek to understand and manipulate the key components of those experiences—whether historical events, persons, or narratives—to accomplish their objectives. Thus, sustained, organized political violence cannot be adequately explained without analyzing the historical context in which it developed. Some of the themes analyzed in this section are the legacies, whether organizational, political, or social, of conflict over time; the formation of group and organizational identity and its attendant narrative; the development of societal and political institutions; and the changing relationships, and perceptions thereof, that balance national, local, and/or group interests.[6]

Charles Tilly, a pioneering sociologist studying political conflict, made important observations about the relationship between social movements and historical context. Several of these are described below:

- Social movements incorporate locally available cultural materials such as language, social categories, and widely shared beliefs; they therefore vary as a function of historically determined local cultural accumulations.
- Path dependency prevails in social movements as in other political processes, such that events occurring at one stage in a sequence constrain the range of events that is possible at later stages.
- Once social movements have occurred and acquired names, both the name and competing representations of social movements became available as signals, models, threats, and/or aspirations for later actors.[7]

While Tilly's observations address social movements, usually understood as nonviolent political movements, he and his collaborators argued that contentious political activity belonged on a continuum, not in separate categories.[8] Violent and nonviolent groups belonged to the same genus but used different "repertoires of contention." Thus, the same methodologies used to explain nonviolent political activity could also be useful in explaining violent political activity. Our extensive research on nearly thirty insurgencies supports this theory. The

insurgencies, but also the individual participants themselves, often began their careers by engaging in nonviolent political activity, transitioning to violence sometimes only after many years. To connect the observations described above more explicitly with revolutionary and insurgent activities, we examine each of these general observations of social movements and apply them to the specific activities associated with an insurgency or revolution. Revolutions and insurgencies typically begin as local or regional movements, and as such they include all of the aspects of local cultural material, which, as mentioned above, contributes to the ontology of a social movement.

Insurgent activities frequently cross borders and have an influence on the societies and movements in adjacent regions. Actions taken by an insurgent organization at one point in time can eliminate or enable possible future options for furthering the insurgency. Groups associated with revolutions and insurgencies usually seek recognition for their actions, so it is important for them to have names and symbols (emblems, flags, etc.) that can be easily associated with them and their causes. These representations then become the public branding of the organization and are used by supporters and detractors alike to further the narrative or counter-narrative of a movement. Given these factors, the historical context within which any insurgency, revolution, or other internal conflict takes place is a critical element in analyzing these events.

Socioeconomic Conditions

How do socioeconomic conditions affect insurgencies? One important socioeconomic variable to consider is per-capita gross domestic product (GDP), and the high correlation of this variable with political stability is among one of the most robust findings in the analysis of conflict dynamics. In general, some of the relevant socioeconomic factors that impact political violence include poverty, relative deprivation, opportunity costs, and ethnic nationalism.

With respect to poverty, some political scientists argue that countries with lower levels of economic development are more likely to witness political violence.[9] Poverty describes the poor material wealth of individuals or societies, but it also tells researchers that the country is likely suffering from a host of other ills. Rather than just a simple measure of wealth, a country's low GDP per capita is also a proxy measure for poor state capacity. States with poor capacity feature a central government with a limited ability to project power across their territory to enforce laws, policies, and regulations.[10] Often, the governments in these states have weak institutions, poor governance, and widespread

corruption, all factors that enable insurgents to more easily recruit and operate. For instance, in Colombia, a relatively wealthy developing country, limited resources made it difficult for the government to build road infrastructure in rural areas. As a result, the security forces found it difficult to access remote areas where insurgents found sanctuary. However, poverty by itself is not enough to predict an insurgency. It is best understood as a risk factor for political conflict.[11]

Researchers also look at additional factors that are closely related to poverty, such as the presence of a large landless population. In many countries, including Iran and Colombia, land reform was a prominent feature of the demands of resistance movements in the twentieth century.[12] Poverty can also introduce "selective incentives" to participate in insurgencies. These incentives are the advantages that accrue to participants, whether economic gain or enhanced social status and political power, gained by participating in a successful rebellion.[13] Other research has also indicated that countries with extensive patron–client networks, large agricultural sectors, and highly uneven patterns of land ownership are also at risk for political conflict.[c]

Another branch of research related to poverty looks at how a government's efforts to modernize society and the economy can lead to increased tensions.[15] More specifically, this perspective argues that the modernization process is inherently conflictual since in practice it is often uneven, as greater emphasis is usually placed on economic and social uplift of downtrodden groups without developing a political framework for adequately incorporating them in the political process. Elite members of the *ancien régime* may see their fortunes decline relative to newly empowered classes, yet the latter remain disenchanted as the former may still control the levers of political power. This dynamic was present in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Sri Lanka, as rising members of the *karavas* caste in Sinhalese society attempted to challenge the political power of the *govigama*, the highest group within the Sinhalese constellation of castes.

Another proposed socioeconomic factor theorized to contribute to conflict is relative political, social, and economic grievances. In *Why*

[c] In such an environment, patron–client relations may suppress the desire of the peasantry to offer support to reformist parties that seek to reduce extreme levels of economic and land inequality. Specifically, a small oligarchic land-holding elite may use its economic power over the peasantry to compel the latter to vote for parties that oppose land redistribution (which would involve the breakup and sell-off of large estates). Joshi and Mason[14] found that Maoist insurgents in Nepal who supported land reform were more successful in mobilizing peasants to support an insurgency than to support their candidates for parliament. They found that patron–client relationships prevented the peasantry from offering their political support, and that the insurgents had greater support in areas where they were able to disrupt clientelist dependency between the landed elite and the peasantry.

Men Rebel, Ted Gurr argued that political violence can be explained by relative deprivation, which occurs when individuals or groups feel deprived of resources or opportunities in comparison with others in society.[16] If political allegiance is based on ethnicity and one ethnic minority group experiences deprivation relative to the ethnic majority group (as happened with the Tamils in Sri Lanka vis-à-vis the Sinhalese in the early 1970s), then the minority may give up hope for satisfying its aspirations within a unitary state and seek to detach itself from the nation.

Other related important indicators for grievance are political exclusion and economic inequality. In Colombia, for example, following the country's mid-century civil war, La Violencia, political elites established a closed political system that disenfranchised several groups, especially communist and socialist ones. This reinforced Colombia's historical inability to include all its citizens in a political process, leading to political exclusion and the economic space and motivation for insurgency by both political and criminal groups.

Social scientists also link poor economic development to reduced opportunity costs for potential rebels. People mired in poverty have few opportunities for economic gain. For these individuals, joining an insurgency is not a sacrifice of resources in other, more lucrative fields. Instead, joining an insurgency may offer economic benefits, making recruitment easier for insurgent groups.[17] Lowered opportunity costs are magnified in areas with "lootable" resources such as drugs or diamonds that can be used to finance an insurgency and enrich its participants.

The analysis of the socioeconomic factors underlying political conflict also includes examining the dynamics between different ethnic groups in a state. After the Cold War, the incidence of wars motivated by identity grievances proliferated. Social scientists refer to these conflicts as ethnic wars. Ethnic wars may also be influenced by additional factors, such as relative deprivation and political exclusion, but the fulcrum of these conflicts is identity. The clash of ethnic identities and fears of cultural extinction can be the animus motivating these conflicts. Political scientist Benedict Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community" in which "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[18] Anderson's seminal concept highlights how groups, whether nations or ethnicities, together construct a common identity through shared linguistic, regional, or religious attributes, among others.

These dynamics are also present in ethnic groups. In Sri Lanka, the ethnic Tamil Tigers battled the Sinhalese government for decades

to secure an independent state. The Tamils and Sinhalese communities constructed their identities based on both facts and distortions of the historical record. Thus, while separate south Indian and Sinhalese communities have resided on the island for several thousand years, during the recent conflict some participants may have "read history backwards."[19] The communities began to view past conflicts through the prism of an identity paradigm, irrespective of whether the participants of the conflicts in the distant past were motivated by ethnic grievances.

The social science research on ethnic identity and political conflict can be divided into three primary perspectives. Despite a burgeoning research program, social scientists do not agree on how ethnic identity impacts the dynamics of insurgency. Early research identified the extent of ethnic heterogeneity as a motivating factor for conflict. Ethnic heterogeneity refers to the diversity of different ethnic groups in a country. It was thought that the more ethnic groups resided in a country, the more likely it was to experience political conflict.[20] Another school of thought argued that other risk factors, such as low levels of economic development and weak institutions, were more important contributors to political conflict than the ethnic makeup of a country.[21] The third and final perspective developed more nuanced arguments. These scholars argued that ethnic groups which were excluded from political power were most likely to rebel. A widely used data set, the Minorities at Risk database, tracks disenfranchised ethnic groups all over the world.[22] In the same vein, other research has added to arguments based on political exclusion. This research looks at how the distribution of power in the political system among competing groups affects conflict. Ethnic groups are more likely to rebel when the center of power in the country is segmented among competing groups and when a smaller ethnic majority rules over and excludes a larger ethnic majority.[23]

In addition to the long-running ethnic insurgency in Sri Lanka discussed above, numerous ARIS case studies were driven by ethnic politics. The decades-long conflict in Northern Ireland pitted Catholics and Protestants against one another. The conflict was fueled by the political exclusion of Catholics by the Protestant-dominated government. Protestants largely ruled the country even though the Catholic community comprised the majority of the population. Similarly, an ethnic Albanian insurgency erupted in Kosovo after Slobodan Milosevic gained control of the Serbian government in 1989. While in office, Milosevic dissolved the political autonomy of Kosovo, rendering it subordinate to the Serbian national government. Combined with his policies of exclusion targeted against ethnic Albanians, Kosovo declared its independence and mounted an armed insurgency against Milosevic's government.

Government and Politics

When considering government and politics in the contextual analysis of insurgency, it is helpful to begin by focusing on the impact of ideas and institutions on the decisions and actions of stakeholders in the conflict. An analysis of the impact of ideas requires understanding the political discourses within state and society and the dynamics between the state and challengers to its authority. When looking at how institutions influence decisions and actions, researchers consider the type of government and the capacity of the state to govern. Together, these factors help explain how insurgent groups are able to mobilize and operate in a state.

Civil society groups independent of the government contribute to the political context in which insurgencies emerge. Indeed, such groups may be among the main actors within a rebellion. More specifically, we have discussed insurgency or revolution as a specific instance of a social movement. Social movements have been defined as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, or associations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity."[24] Government and politics is one of the primary means through which ideas are enacted within society. Social movements (such as insurgencies) are another. The key difference between social movements and other means within society is that social movements (1) exhibit strong lines of conflict with political or social opponents, (2) involve dense interorganizational networks, and (3) are made up of individuals whose sense of collective identity exists beyond any specific campaign or engagement.[25]

Social scientists often look at how different regime types shape patterns of political violence in a country. Regime types are broad categories, such as democratic and autocratic, used to describe the political structure of a government. Currently, social scientists favor these institutional factors over the socioeconomic factors discussed above for their efficacy in explaining political violence in a country. Simply put, "most states have potential insurgents with grievances and resources, but almost always possess far greater military power than do insurgents." With these advantages, competent regimes are usually capable of defeating armed challenges to their authority. Weak and divided regimes, however, are less capable of defending their authority.[26]

As a result, social scientists often look at a state's regime type as a significant factor for explaining the emergence of political conflict. Many of the initial studies on this topic used a simple categorization of regimes as either democratic or autocratic, but researchers have also adopted a three-way categorization that includes democracy and

autocracy as categories, as well as a middle category of "anocracy," which characterizes a government that has both democratic and autocratic elements. Although the findings have recently been challenged, anocracies are thought to be at higher risk for insurgencies than fully democratic or autocratic regimes.[27]

Most researchers agree that developed, mature democratic states are the least vulnerable to political conflict. Secure democracies provide pressure valves for the release of societal discontent through well-trod legal-institutional channels. In the United States, for instance, citizens are able to vote leaders out of office, contribute to groups lobbying for their interests, or engage in civil resistance to voice their discontent. If radicalized resistance movements were to opt to use violent or illegal means to achieve their political objectives in the United States, they would have difficulty raising support. For the average citizen, the costs are simply too high and the expected payoff too low.

In highly repressive regimes, the situation is nearly a mirror opposite of the situation facing open democratic societies. Highly repressive regimes provide no legal channels for political opposition or dissent. In these authoritarian states, it is difficult for political dissenters to form an organized political opposition to the regime. These regimes usually have highly refined secret police and other intelligence-gathering capabilities. Before the Syrian civil war and the Arab Spring, for instance, the Assad regime kept dissent in check through its secret police, the Mukhabarat. The police had an extensive intelligence apparatus supplemented by ordinary civilians encouraged to inform on family, friends, and colleagues. As a result, most Syrians were highly suspicious of voicing dissent against the Assad regime.[28] In such regimes, any attempts at opposition are usually met with arbitrary arrests, interrogations, and detentions. Political opposition is usually stillborn, crushed by the overwhelming force of the state's security apparatus. For the average citizen in these repressive regimes, such as North Korea, the costs of resistance are simply too high.

However, in today's world, many states fall somewhere in between these two extremes. Social scientists call these states, which combine democratic and authoritarian features, hybrid regimes, or anocracies. These states might, for instance, have nominally democratic elections but might rig or otherwise corrupt election results. As a result, the ruling party or political leaders never face serious challenges to their authority.

Researchers find that political conflict is more likely to arise in these anocracies than in truly democratic or repressive states.[29] This finding is referred to as the "inverted U-curve" because the concentration of political conflict on the authoritarian–democratic scale falls in

the middle. These states typically allow just enough political and civil liberties that political opposition is able to form. The inherent contradictions in these states, which claim to be democratic but engage in activities that do not support these claims, also fuel societal grievances. When the political opposition mounts a challenge to the state, security forces often violently suppress it, leading some resistance movements to adopt violence as a strategy to achieve their political objectives.[30]

In the preceding sections, we have already discussed how political exclusion fueled political conflict in Colombia. In many ways, the state resembled an anocracy. After its mid-century war, the government altered its constitution to rotate the presidency between the two major parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, in control of the government. The National Front government, as it was called, made it very difficult for the emerging middle and lower classes to be incorporated into the political process. Additionally, a small elite sector controlled both parties. In 1970, one outside contender for the Liberal presidential candidacy, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, ran for office but lost the election. Many believed that electoral fraud perpetrated by the political elite prevented Rojas's victory.

This event was the trigger for the formation of an important insurgent group in Colombia, the M-19, which took its name from the date of the alleged fraudulent election, April 19. In its propaganda, the M-19 disparaged the Colombian regime for failing to live up to its democratic ideals. The M-19 was instrumental in a 1991 constitutional reform process that eliminated some of these barriers to political participation.

Some researchers, however, consider these categorizations (democracy, anocracy, and autocracy) to be overly simplistic or ambiguous. Recent work has developed a more detailed set of parameters to determine what researchers call "the institutional character of the national political regime." These parameters explain the degree to which elections for leaders of countries (i.e., presidents, prime ministers, etc.) are open, competitive, and institutionalized (i.e., rule based), and whether opposition and other political groups can compete for political power and influence. After considerable research, experts found these attributes to be the most significant indicators or predictors of conflict.[31]

ENDNOTES

1 Charles Tilly and Robert E. Gordon, "It Depends," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert E. Gordon and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6, 9.

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